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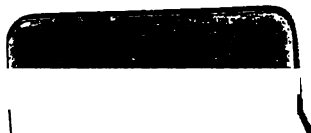
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The
Aged Minister's Last Legacy

TO

THE NEW CHURCH,

SIGNIFIED BY

THE NEW JERUSALEM IN THE APOCALYPSE.

BY THE

REV. JOSEPH PROUD.

"Knowing that shortly I must put off my tabernacle, I will endeavour that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."—2 Ep. Pet. i. 14, 15.

SECOND EDITION,

(ABRIDGED AND ADAPTED TO THE PRESENT TIME).

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

THE REV. E. MADELEY,

OF BIRMINGHAM.



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ADVERTISEMENT
TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

THIS work was originally published in the year 1818, and having for a long time been out of print, it has been deemed advisable to prepare the present edition. In doing so, the opportunity has been taken to abridge the original work, by the removal of many passages of a temporary and personal nature; thus rendering it more truly what the author intended it to be, as expressed in his Preface,—“of particular and lasting use to the members of the New Church.” In furtherance of this object, the Editor has occasionally introduced an additional passage of Scripture, or a few words which seemed necessary to the fuller and clearer understanding of a subject, or the more complete carrying out of the author's views and ideas; repetitions and redundancies have been withdrawn; and some verbal improvements have been made; all which seemed to come within the scope of a proposed abridged edition.

A MEMOIR
OF
THE REV. JOSEPH PROUD.

BY THE REV. E. MADELEY.

THE memoirs of men who have been distinguished for their virtue and piety, and whose lives have been devoted to disinterested and extensive usefulness, have, in all ages of the world, not only proved interesting and profitable to readers in general, but valuable sources of study and reflection. They often serve the important purpose of directing and stimulating the exertions of others, to promote the temporal and spiritual welfare of the human race, and of strengthening their resolutions "*to follow them who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises.*"

The Reverend JOSEPH PROUD, (the Author of the following work,) whose eminent qualifications for the ministry, and whose piety and zeal, shed a lustre over the station in which he so long moved, and whose biography is so intimately blended with the early history and progress of the New Church, was a son of the Rev. John Proud, of Beaconsfield, in Buckinghamshire. He was born on the 22nd of March, 1745. When he was about eleven years of age his father removed, to take charge of the General Baptist congregation at Wisbech, in Cambridge-shire. Though of limited education, yet, under the fostering care of worthy parents, his mind was early imbued with religious principles. In the year 1767, before he had reached his twenty-second year, he was invited, by the pressing solicitations of the Church, to assist his aged father in the sacred functions of the ministry. He was soon after removed to take charge of a society at Knipton, in Leicestershire, where he remained

three or four years. On the 3rd of February, 1769, he was married to his first wife, of whom he had issue eleven children, two of whom survived him. Soon after the decease of his first wife in 1785, he married a widow, by whom he had three more children, who all died in their infancy. Mrs. Susannah Proud survived her beloved husband three months. In 1780 he accepted an invitation to preside over the Church at Fleet, in Lincolnshire. Here he was ordained to the pastoral office; and in 1782, such had been the success of his ministry, that the place of worship was considerably enlarged. About this time, Mr. Hunt, then a surgeon of Norwich, but afterwards of Gissing, in Norfolk, (who subsequently became a cordial receiver of the New Church doctrines, and died in 1824,) proposed to build a Chapel and residence for him in that city, and give them to him for the term of his life. He accepted the handsome offer, and a commodious place of worship, accommodating from 600 to 800 persons, was immediately erected in Berstreet. In 1786 Mr. Proud removed thither, and Mr. Hunt became his colleague in the ministry. The same year he published a little poem, entitled *Calvinism Exploded*, which passed through several editions. He also held a public disputation with a Minister of the Society of Friends or Quakers, which was likewise printed. Mr. Proud remained in Norwich about five years. His labours were most successful, and he continued an acceptable and distinguished Minister of the General Baptist connexion till the year 1791,—a period of twenty-five years. During this time he printed several small works, chiefly poems, besides composing many others, both in prose and poetry; one of which, entitled *The Apostate's Progress*, written after the style of Bunyan, was printed anonymously at the earnest solicitation of a friend to whom he had presented it, in 1825.

I now come to a new era in the religious life of our venerated friend. About two years after his settlement at Norwich, a physician, resident in that city, earnestly recommended him to read the writings of the Honourable Emanuel Swedenborg, of which only a few were at that time translated into English, and

he lent him the *Treatise on Heaven and Hell*. Mr. Proud read the work, without taking any interest in it, and returned it with the expression of his opinion, that it was a record of the wild and enthusiastic reveries of a fertile yet morbid imagination. Subsequently, and directed doubtless by Divine Providence, J. W. Salmon, Esq., a well-known and zealous receiver, having heard of Mr. Proud's celebrity, was induced to take a journey from London, accompanied by a friend, expressly to visit him. Mr. Salmon was the guest of Mr. Proud during his stay, and lost no time in introducing to his earnest attention the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church. Mr. Hunt, at once shewed a disposition to lend a favourable ear to the truths announced, in which he was at first vehemently opposed by Mr. Proud, who burst into the room where Mr. Hunt and our New Church friends were together, and in the most strenuous manner exhorted Mr. Hunt to have nothing to do with those doctrines. Anxious to suppress what he considered to be contrary to Scripture testimony, Mr. Proud undertook to convince the visitors, by public discussion, and private argument, that they were the dupes of an artful and visionary enthusiast, and that the religious sentiments they maintained were utterly unworthy the acceptance of mankind. Mr. Salmon, however, exhibited so truly meek, humble, and loving a spirit, that he finally prevailed in silencing the opposition, and complied with the intreaty of Mr. Proud to prolong his stay; during which he preached several impressive discourses, which were highly approved by the majority of the large congregations who listened to them. In his private diary, Mr. Proud recorded at the time, his impression of this visit, as follows, under date of "Tuesday morning, 17 June, 1788," "Mr. J. W. Salmon came to our house. He lives at Nantwich, in Cheshire, is a Member of the New Church, and preaches the doctrines. He preached at our Chapel nine times. Never did I hear any man preach with such power, and Divine demonstration. He appears to be the most humble, affectionate, and holy man I ever knew; and I believe I shall never forget

what he laid before me. I verily think that the Lord in great mercy sent him to me and the church for great good; and I trust we have a people prepared to receive further degrees of love and wisdom. O that we may be thus prepared! I love the man most sincerely; and bless the Lord my Saviour for sending him. He staid with us till Thursday, the 26th,—that is ten days, and I accompanied him to Dereham, where I took my leave of this dear, dear man."

It will be seen, then, that what had been urged in favour of the doctrines of the New Church by Mr. Salmon, made a very considerable impression upon our friend's mind, who requested, before he left, that he would send him a volume of Swedenborg's works to read, which he promised that he would peruse with a serious and unprejudiced mind. Shaken in his belief as to many of his preconceived religious sentiments, he suffered great mental inquietude, but concluded, that if the doctrines of Eternal Truth were thus providentially offered for his acceptance, an obstinate rejection of them, might with justice be imputed to him as a crime. He, therefore, resolved to read in the spirit of prayer for Divine guidance and illumination, and diligently comparing what he read with the Word of God, to weigh all his conclusions in the balance of his best judgment. He anxiously waited for the book, and was not kept long in suspense, for Mr. Salmon, as soon as he returned, forwarded him a copy of *The True Christian Religion, or Universal Theology of the New Church*. On the morning after receiving this precious treasure, he rose early, and, according to his usual custom, retired to his study in the garden. Before he began to read, he kneeled down, and prayed fervently to the Lord, that he would be pleased to influence and guide his mind on the present momentous occasion. He supplicated for no miraculous interposition. He asked for light and understanding, and that he might be rightly directed by the Divine Word. He then opened the sacred volume, and his attention was arrested by the first passage which met his eye (Hab. i. 5), "*Behold ye among the heathen and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will*

work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you." These words appeared to him to describe his state, and be an express answer to his prayer. From that instant he resolved, calmly to consider the writings he had previously despised. He began to read *The Universal Theology*, and as he proceeded from chapter to chapter, day by day, he found his old mistaken and gloomy notions of religion gradually giving way, and new convictions springing up of the truth of the New Dispensation. These convictions grew, and were soon the established principles of his mind. How could it be otherwise, when such a work was read in such a spirit! He found the doctrines advanced, were confirmed by the most ample corroborative testimony of the Word of God, and the most cogent appeals to enlightened reason. The more he read, the deeper was his gratitude, the firmer his faith, and the more intense his delight. Swedenborg's memorable relations, indeed, "staggered" him at first very much. He had no friend at hand to help him. He could not see, from his preconceived views of the human soul and the eternal world, how they contain real, though often astounding spiritual facts, to be confirmed by inward experience, consciousness, and perception, as well as by the direct revelations made to patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, as recorded in the divinely inspired Word. The science of correspondences had not as yet unlocked these mental treasures to his soul; but, still, he was afraid to deny their verity and reality, and recoiled from the preposterously absurd thought of their being the mere inventions of a feverish, distracted, and distorted imagination. He saw that these relations were written in a lucid style, that many of the deductions harmonized with Scripture, reason, philosophy, and genuine morality. He was satisfied to pass them over for a time, till he had become better acquainted with those heaven-descended principles, which he felt assured would be sufficient, most satisfactorily to explain, all their apparent mysteries. Firmly persuaded of the truth and importance of all that he read, and could comprehend, like the apostle Paul, "he conferred not with flesh and blood," but

without hesitation and fear, proceeded openly to declare to all around him the new doctrines he had espoused. Like all novitiates in the New Church, he was impatient for the world to receive them, and expected that they would be embraced by multitudes with readiness, thankfulness, and joy,—that they needed only to be presented in order to find acceptance. In his preaching and conversation, he chiefly dwelt upon the doctrines of the Lord, and the necessity of a good life to insure salvation. Some of his hearers were convinced of the truth by his earnest and powerful appeals, others doubted, and many denied.

On the evening of Tuesday, 24th of February, 1789, nine persons were received into church-fellowship, by the rite of baptism administered by immersion. They were baptized "into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only God of heaven and earth, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in One Divine Person." At the conclusion of the ceremony he preached an eloquent and instructive discourse from Ezekiel xxvii. 22, 23. This sermon was printed at the request of the congregation, and may be regarded as one of the earliest discourses, (if not the very earliest,) published after the formation of the first New Church Society in London a few months before. This sermon was entitled *New Jerusalem Blessings, or the Unity, Purity, and Happiness of real Christians in the last Days, in which the New Kingdom of the Lord is established—Jesus the King thereof, who is the only God of Heaven and Earth.*

In July of this year he began a series of morning poetical meditations on various texts of Scripture, similar in design to a year's meditations in prose, but only continued them about three months. They are, however, full of aspirations and thanksgivings to the Lord, in relation to his introduction to the New Church.

This same year, he had occasion to visit London, where he was introduced to the receivers of the New Church doctrines, who met weekly for reading and conversation at a friend's

house. He was welcomed by all, and delighted with his reception. After entering his name in the Society's book he returned home greatly strengthened and encouraged. He printed a poem entitled *Jehovah's Mercy made known to all Mankind in these Last Days ; or an Invitation to all Men of Religion to accept the Mercy of the Lord, as now manifested by His Messenger and Scribe the Honourable Emanuel Swedenborg*. This poem had a large circulation, and reached several editions.

Immediately after his visit to London, he received an urgent request to prepare a volume of original hymns for the use of the public worship of the New Church. With this request he at once complied ; and in the brief space of about three months presented a MS. copy of upwards of 300 hymns. These were greatly approved and an edition was printed in 1790. In the second edition, printed in the following year, 1791, several additional hymns were inserted suitable for particular occasions and special subjects. In England the sixth edition was reached, and in the *Conference Hymn Book*, which superseded its use in public worship, a large proportion of Mr. Proud's hymns are more or less included.

He was soon convinced that it would be impossible to remain in Norwich as the Minister of Ber-street Chapel. Although by the title-deeds, the Chapel, Minister's house, &c., were his own for life, yet, having changed his religious sentiments, he felt that he could not conscientiously hold them, although he had no prospects before him. He, therefore, freely conceded their use to the General Baptist denomination, and one of the last acts of his life was to convey the whole to trustees of their own selection. In the course of a very few weeks, however, he received a pressing invitation to visit a gentleman in Birmingham, who was engaged in building a temple for the use of the New Church, to see what was doing, and whether he could make the needful arrangements to become the stated minister. He paid this visit in June 1790 ; and it was soon amicably arranged for him to take the charge of the congregation, when the temple was completed. On making application in London, he

was ordained a Minister of the New Church, on the 3rd May, 1791, by the Rev. James Hindmarsh. This Temple was the first place of worship ever built for the promulgation of the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem. No reasonable expense was spared in its erection; and it was opened for public worship, on Sunday, June 19th, 1791. On this occasion Mr. Proud preached two discourses, morning and evening, from 2 Samuel vii. 29; in which he took occasion to announce the general doctrines to be advocated in that place. These sermons are before the public; and a contemporary observes respecting them, "that they were masterly compositions, were delivered with the utmost propriety, and were satisfactorily received by an overflowing audience."

In the same year, the celebrated Dr. Priestley addressed a series of *Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church*, to which Mr. Proud printed a reply in the month of November; and in the following month, a sermon on *The True Nature of the Soul and the Resurrection*. Early in the year 1792, he printed a discourse on *The Fundamental Doctrines of the New Jerusalem*, preached at Birmingham and Bristol. In September of the same year he published a volume of *Twenty Practical Discourses*; and in October, a sermon entitled *General Proofs of the Lord's Second Advent*, preached in the Unitarian Chapel at Warwick, and another entitled *Jesus Christ the Supreme Head of His Church*, preached in Birmingham.

The Temple was regularly crowded to excess, and great indeed were the expectations formed of the future prosperity of the Society; expectations, alas! not then to be realized. While multitudes were flocking to hear "the great New Jerusalem Preacher," and the Temple was begun to be enlarged, the gentleman who had erected it, was unexpectedly involved in ruin before any trustees were appointed, and the property was claimed by his creditors, but found to be heavily mortgaged. Mr. Proud had reposed so much confidence in him as to place in his hands all his little savings, the hard-earned produce of many years of labour and thrifty economy. He lost all, together with his

situation as a Minister; and with a family to provide for was suddenly thrown upon the world without any apparent means of support. In this trying position, Mr. Proud had no resource but the Divine Providence. He made no loud complaints, but endeavoured to bear his heavy trials with christian fortitude and submission. Nor was he left without consolation. To the sincere sympathy of his friends, was likewise added, that of strangers. Dr. Madan, the then rector of St. Philip's Church, called at his house, expressed his grief for him in the tenderest manner, and begged his acceptance of a handsome present. Several gentlemen of the Established Church kindly visited him, and liberally contributed to his necessities. A few gentlemen of the Unitarian Societies generously waited upon him with a subscription of £30, to which, subsequently, considerable additions were made. Many others seemed delighted to express in every way their love and goodwill, and to afford him substantial help. Mr. Proud was truly astonished at the friendship expressed, and the benevolence received. So unexpected a reverse, and so unsolicited an expression of sympathy, overwhelmed his sensibilities for the time. He felt truly grateful that, notwithstanding the cause of goodness and truth had thus early received so severe a blow, in the dishonourable conduct of a professor, he was sustained by the assurance, of being still personally held in universal respect and esteem, by the inhabitants of the town. Such, however, was the irritated feeling of the public, excited towards the principal cause of all the mischief, that fears were entertained of the temple being burned to the ground. Threats to this effect were uttered, and though an extra watchman was provided, and great precaution taken, some combustible matter was projected through a window by a person unknown, and set the place on fire. It was soon discovered, and the damage done was but slight.

Just at this time a very large and beautiful Church was in course of erection in Peter Street, Manchester, for a seceding clergyman of the established Church, who had become an avowed receiver of the New Church doctrines. Mr. Proud was

invited to be his colleague, and accepted the invitation. From a scene of great trial he immediately removed thither. On Sunday, August 11th, 1793, the New Church was consecrated and opened for public worship. He preached on that occasion two able and impressive discourses from Isaiah lx. 1, 2. His preaching proved as popular at Manchester as at Birmingham, and the spacious Church was speedily thronged with attentive hearers, who listened with delight to his eloquent appeals. A painful disagreement with his colleague, however, soon disturbed the peace of the society, and made Mr. Proud's situation at Manchester, so peculiarly distressing, as to render it impossible for him to stay. He received earnest solicitations to settle at Bristol, and at Liverpool also, where a new Temple was then erecting; but, in the mean time, the Society at Birmingham had collected their scattered remains, and with great exertions, a few zealous friends, who were warmly and materially assisted by our late friend, James Meredith, Esq., built a second Temple, within a few doors of the former, but considerably smaller, being only designed for a temporary accommodation. Mr. Proud was then urgently intreated to return; and he accepted the offer after an absence of only seven months. He preached his farewell sermon at Peter-street, on Sunday afternoon, January 19th, 1794, from Mark xiii. 34, and left the congregation amid universal regrets.

He consecrated and opened the new Temple in Birmingham, on the 30th of March, when he preached three interesting sermons; in the morning from Isaiah liv. 11—13; in the afternoon from Psalm xi. 7, 8; and in the evening from Psalm xxxvii. 27. Again the congregations were overflowing, the Society was prosperous, and harmony prevailed. "Indeed, such was his celebrity, while at Birmingham, that to hear 'the great New-Jerusalem preacher,' was thought a matter of necessity by strangers visiting the town; and the Society fully expected, had he remained, soon to be able to obtain as large and commodious a chapel as that which they had lost." In 1796, he printed two New Year's discourses *On the Great Importance of*

Improving Time, and also, *A Fast Sermon on the occasion of the War*.

Early in the year 1797, a gentleman from London waited upon him with the information, that he and another friend were building a commodious and handsome Temple in Cross-street, Hatton-garden, for the express use of the New Church, without the most distant view to temporal advantage, and purely to promote the extension of the New Church doctrines; and as a minister would be required, he was come down to Birmingham to have a personal interview with him and to persuade him, if possible, to accept the appointment, as promising to open out a most extensive field of use. The Society in Newhall-street were convened during the gentleman's stay, and were reluctantly prevailed upon to consent to his removal, and a final arrangement was accordingly made. On the 7th of May he ordained his successor, delivering a sermon and charge from Mark x. 16, 17, and again quitted Birmingham for a new sphere of labour.

The New Jerusalem Temple at Cross-street, Hatton-garden, was consecrated and opened on the 30th of the following July. Mr. Proud preached in the morning from Isa. lxii. 10; and in the evening from Dan. ii. 44. Here his services were crowned with almost unexampled success, "and we can state," says a contemporary, "for we continually witnessed it, that the crowds which then pressed to obtain a hearing of Mr. Proud were not fewer than those which more recently flocked after the celebrated Mr. Irving at that same Chapel. Of the *matter* of his discourses, a judgment may be formed from those which are in print: as compositions, they were by no means faultless; but they presented the leading doctrines of the New Church in a very striking and convincing manner, and exposed the opposite errors with great strength and energy; while in pressing home moral considerations they were powerfully persuasive. His delivery, at the time of which we are speaking, notwithstanding some provincialisms of accent, certainly did possess an extraordinary charm: his voice, look, action, and whole manner, were strong-

ly calculated to rivet attention, and to send home what he said both to the understanding and the hearts of his hearers. The consequence was, that many, who came to hear him, became affectionate and steady receivers of the doctrines of the New Church."

This year he composed a small but interesting treatise on Pulpit Oratory, which, if I may judge from my own case, he was accustomed to place in the hands of young men who applied to him for instructions in the ministry, and for ordination. In the year 1798 he published a sermon on *Divine Grace*: and another on the decease of *Dr. John Harrison*.

About this time, some serious differences arose, between the proprietors of the Temple and the congregation, arising out of an unexpected demand for an increased rental. The amount demanded was considered exorbitant, and it was resisted. At this period Mr. Proud saw a larger and more elegant Chapel vacant, in York-street, St. James's, capable of accommodating twelve or thirteen hundred people; and after making inquiries, he laid the circumstances before the Committee, and urged the desirableness of an immediate removal. They at once agreed to take the Chapel and secure it on a lease of seven years. In a few weeks, the notice for an advance of rent at Cross-street having expired, Mr. Proud preached his farewell sermon on Sunday, September 29th, 1799; in the morning from Psalm cxxii. 6, and in the evening from Exodus xxiii. 18. In these sermons, he calmly explained, and firmly defended, the reasons for their removal.

York-street Chapel was consecrated and opened on the Sunday following, viz., October the 6th, when he preached two able discourses,—morning and evening, from Micah iv. 5, to crowded and admiring audiences.

The lease of York-street Chapel expired in 1806. The congregations had been very numerous and respectable, many influential persons, in London and elsewhere, had been brought into connexion with the Church through his powerful ministrations, and it was judiciously determined by the Society,

though at a large increase of rent, to renew the lease for another seven years. During these fourteen years, Mr. Proud, besides composing all his sermons, wrote a large amount of miscellaneous poetry and prose, and kept up an extensive correspondence; he visited many of the societies, opened new places of worship, and ordained several ministers. He was an Editor of the *Aurora*, a monthly magazine devoted to the New Church, and published in 1799 and 1800, and a frequent contributor to its pages. He also continued to take an especial interest in the Society at Birmingham, and besides occasional visits, sent them several earnest and affectionate addresses, one of which with the title of *A Friendly Letter, &c.*, was printed in the year 1800. About the year 1803 he wrote and published a little practical and pious treatise *On the Lord's Prayer*. In 1804 he published a sermon *On the Lord's Resurrection*, and also a volume of *Fifteen* interesting and useful *Discourses*. At the close of the year 1806, he published a sermon *On the Death of Nelson*, with a Monody, and also a small octavo volume in refutation of Unitarianism; or *A Friendly and Candid Address to Unitarians in general; and also a particular Reply to some late Publications*. In 1808, he published *A Course of Lectures* on the leading doctrines of the New Church, with poems, followed by *A Second Course* in 1810. The same year he published a small volume of *Six Discourses to Young Persons*, which have proved of considerable service; and also composed and printed a small book of *Hymns and Songs for Children*. On the 13th of May, in this year, he preached a charity sermon in York-street Chapel by desire of His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex, for the benefit of the Queen's Hospital, at Bayswater, to a brilliant and overflowing congregation; and composed a hymn for the occasion. Both were greatly approved, but, through an oversight, were not printed as requested by the Committee of the Institution. In 1812, he printed an anonymous poem entitled *Calvinism without Modern Refinements, fairly Stated and Examined*, intended as a check to the monstrous errors of Election and Predestination. In 1812 he published *Two Discourses*

on the *Commencement of the Year*, and a sermon preached in Birmingham for the benefit of the Sunday Schools, entitled, *The Era of Light*. The second lease of York-street Chapel expired in 1813, and a large increase of rent being demanded for a renewal, which it was thought too exorbitant for the Society to pay, the Chapel was relinquished, and they removed to a small and obscure room in Lisle-street, Leicester-square, which was fitted up at a great cost, "a measure which," as a leading member of the Society afterwards said in writing on the subject, "proved imprudent; for the consequent diminution of numbers and of income, became more than commensurate with the diminution of the expenditure." Mr. Proud preached his farewell sermons at York-street on the 22nd of September, 1813; in the morning from Deut. xxvi. 17—19, and in the evening from Mark xii. 22—24.

Lisle-street Chapel was opened October 10th, when he preached in the morning from Exodus xxxv. 29. As a proof that our friend's ministry was acceptable,—for he was "a workman that needed not to be ashamed,"—I have been informed by those who witnessed the fact, that for the period of seventeen years,—the time he remained in the metropolis,—he always had large and respectable congregations; those in the evening, amounting to not less than from 700 to 1000 people; except, when at Lisle-street, where the place would not contain so great a number.

Hearing that our venerable friend, now approaching the seventieth year of his age, had, from various causes, determined to quit London, the two Societies which at that time existed in Birmingham being in a distracted state, and destitute of a minister, earnestly invited him once more to return. He willingly consented, and made immediate arrangements for his departure. After mature deliberation he decided to become the minister of the smaller branch of the Church, still worshiping in the second Temple erected for him. Advanced in years, half a century of which had been devoted to the arduous labours of the ministry, and depressed by many afflictions and sorrows, he longed for

repose. He purchased a small piece of land at Handsworth, where he built himself a neat little cottage, with the rooms on the ground floor, and a garden in front; here, comparatively, he retired from the world. In 1815, however, he wrote, at the request of the Society at Brightlingsea, a brief but anonymous *Reply* to a scurrilous pamphlet written and circulated against the New Church in that neighbourhood. In 1817 he printed a sermon on that absorbing national event, the lamented decease of the Princess Charlotte, entitled, *The Tears of the Nation*; and about the same time, a small poem on the Divinely Inspired Names of the Lord Jesus Christ; and finally, in the year 1818, he printed his last work, *The Aged Minister's Last Legacy*, which is here presented in a revised and condensed form.

Besides the works above enumerated, he composed, on different occasions, and for various societies, hymns and poetic dialogues for charity sermons and public recitations. Wherever he went he was treated with veneration and respect. The Societies in Birmingham united, and very considerable success attended his exertions, though he had lost much of the vigour of middle life.

At the General Conference of 1815, held in Peter-street, Manchester, from the strenuous support of the late Rev. E. Madeley, of Derby, with whom the proposition originated, and other friends, it was decided, after ample deliberation, that a missionary ministry should be established "as a most desirable object, calculated, through the Divine Providence, to disseminate the blessings of the New Dispensation both extensively and effectually;" that a fund should be raised to defray all expenses, and that the ministers sent out should be approved by the Conference as "properly qualified to travel through Great Britain, for the purpose of visiting the different Societies already established, of forming new societies, and of proclaiming to the inhabitants of this kingdom at large the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem." The plan was admirable, was for some time liberally supported by the Church, and proved rich in useful results, not the least of which was the origination of our

two excellent Missionary Institutions in Manchester and London. Notwithstanding his advanced age, Mr. Proud was urgently solicited by the Conference to undertake the duties of the first missionary, and he rejoiced the whole Church by giving his consent.

At the succeeding Conference of 1816, held in London, Mr. Proud was requested to read the report of the two missionary journeys he had undertaken during the year, in discharge of the duties he had assumed as their missionary minister. This most interesting report relating the extraordinary success which had attended his exertions, and testifying to the affection and respect with which he was everywhere received, was heard with "the most lively feelings of satisfaction by all present," and was directed to be printed in the minutes. His health permitted him to continue this arduous labour only two years. At length, through age and physical infirmities, our venerable friend found the duties of the pastorate too burdensome, and resolved at Midsummer, 1821, to resign an office, which for so many years he had sustained with so much dignity, delight, and usefulness, but, which he could no longer fill with satisfaction to himself. The congregation at Birmingham, from one cause or other, had also, for several years, been in a declining state; the expenses fell upon a few, and with the utmost difficulty they had raised him the small salary agreed upon. Promising to preach gratuitously as often as he could, he retired from the ministry, only possessing as the economic savings of a long life of anxiety and toil, of which thirty-five years were occupied in the ministry of the New Church, his little house and garden, and a private income of about £12 a-year. Though he had devoted all his services to the Church, yet there was no fund on which he had the slightest claim, and no provision whatever had then been made in the Church, for assisting superannuated ministers. He felt assured, however, that the Divine Providence would not forsake him in his old age. Nor was he disappointed in his trust. Noble-hearted and generous-minded friends at Birmingham, London, Bristol, and elsewhere, who would have blushed to have had

their names recorded, hearing of his situation, pressed forward, and to the period of his removal, now rapidly approaching, liberally supplied his temporal wants.

The last extraordinary service in which he engaged was one, respecting which he frequently expressed great anxiety, the ordination of his successor. This service took place on the 8th May, 1825; on which occasion, he delivered to the newly ordained minister, a brief but emphatic and appropriate charge. On the 25th of the same month he sent a Pastor's Valedictory Address to the Society, full of kind and excellent advice.

He was accustomed, both in the early and later periods of his ministry, to extemporaneous preaching; but, entering upon the ministry of a church, whose doctrines were so different from those which he had before professed, and the language, proper for the accurate expression of which, must of necessity be less familiar to him than that which he had practised so long, he feared to trust himself to this mode of speaking, and he consequently delivered written compositions for a number of years. This was, no doubt, a providential circumstance; as those discourses were widely circulated among the rising societies which had no permanent ministers. During his ministry he preached not less than 7000 sermons, 3000 of which were written. He also left behind him in manuscript a large amount of composition in prose and poetry, exclusively on religious and moral subjects; and besides all this labour, he maintained an extensive correspondence with a large circle of friends.

Though Mr. Proud cannot be ranked among authors of the first literary attainments, yet his abilities, as a writer, were respectable; as a public speaker, he was truly eloquent,—if the applicability of that term is to be estimated from the extraordinary effect his delivery frequently produced. He was constantly heard with the most profound attention, and always with delight. Of the innumerable frailties incident to human weakness, but few were discernible amid all the estimable qualities of a Pastor; and it is but justice to remark, that these principally arose out of a reserved manner, which can

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only be ascribed to his natural temperament, distinct from perversity of character. "Placed in extraordinary situations," said one who knew him well, "it is not to be wondered at, if, like the apostle of old, he passed through evil report and good report. Many, we know, expected to find him a model of more than human perfection; and it is not surprising if, on being disappointed in their unreasonable expectations, some underrated his real merits. In his private character he was always irreproachable; and the sincerity of his religious feelings was evinced abundantly by the manner of his conversion to the truth, as related above. He embraced it also, when he had no prospect of any results from it but distress and persecution: he knew not, but that by dissolving his connexion with the Baptists, he should lose his very means of subsistence; and such for a time, threatened to be the result." Who among mankind is wholly free from imperfections? Trials and tribulations are permitted in the Divine economy, to assist in the purification of the mind, by a gradual and almost imperceptible operation. They continually remind us of our polluted and depraved condition by nature, and of the truths which call us to repentance. The good man cannot escape the tribulations attendant on this state of probation: and of these our worthy friend had his portion; while it must be acknowledged, by those who shared his intimacy, that he bore them with a resignation of superhuman origin. He experienced trials of a long-continued and distressing nature in his family; among those he numbered as his friends; in the societies where he laboured; and from severe bodily afflictions, owing to a constitutional disorder, which, for many years, attacked him with frequency and violence. But these are the means overruled by a merciful Providence to purify the faithful Christian, and meeten him for a triumphant entrance on an eternal career of angelic felicity and use, amid the realities of heaven. The serenity and confidence with which he contemplated the end of his probation were truly remarkable. They shew the steady reliance which he placed upon the truths and promises of the Word of God, as ex-

pounded in the heavenly doctrines of the New Jerusalem, and the great degree of preparation he had attained for the inheritance of the just. His private virtues endeared him to his relatives and friends, as a man and a christian; and if anything gave him painful sensations in his latest moments, it was the reflection, that he was about to leave a long-afflicted and beloved wife, who would, by this bereavement, be subjected to the severest trials. His departure was rather sudden, occasioned by a severe attack of the complaint before alluded to. On the Lord's day morning previous to his decease, he was more than usually lively, and, had his strength permitted, felt more than usually desirous of meeting the church again in solemn worship; for some months had passed since he had been capable of staying through a Sabbath morning's service. In the evening of the same day he was taken ill; and on the Thursday morning following, the 3rd of August, 1826, he resigned his spirit into the hands of his Divine Master and Lord.

The last sermon he preached, on an ordinary occasion, was on the 9th of January, 1825. It was an impressive one, from Psalm xl. 2, 3. "*He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord;*" from which subject he promised another discourse; and though he was never permitted to perform that engagement, yet has he left a practical sermon in the remembrance of his life, which was most fully exemplified in the language of that text.

A funeral sermon was preached in the New Jerusalem Temple, Newhall-street, by the writer of this memoir, on Sunday, August 20th, from John xii. part of the 26, "*Where I am,*" saith the Lord, "*there shall also my Servant be,*" to a densely-crowded and deeply-affected audience. At the urgent request of the congregation that discourse was printed, and some portions of it have been interwoven into these pages. His mortal remains, followed by many friends, were interred in Saint

George's Church-yard, Birmingham. On the 21st of the ensuing November, his widow followed her beloved husband into the spiritual world, and her remains were laid in the same grave, on the head-stone of which is this inscription :

" Here are deposited the remains of the
REV. JOSEPH PROUD, late Pastor
of the New Jerusalem Church in Birmingham,
whose removal from this world took place
on the 3rd day of August, 1826,
Aged 81 years.

Devoutly zealous in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, his God and Saviour, he was a faithful and enlightened Minister of His Word; and, for a long series of years, he earnestly laboured to promote the knowledge and practice of genuine Christianity.

" Also the remains of his beloved wife, SUSANNAH,
who departed this life on the 21st day of the succeeding November,
Aged 76 years.

" They left their earthly tabernacles, in the certain hope of jointly participating everlasting blessedness, in those mansions, not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens."

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN OF THE NEW JERUSALEM!

I AM now past what is called "the age of man;" but before I leave this world, I feel it my duty to address my Brethren of the New Church, upon subjects which appear to me to be essential to their present improvement and peace, as well as to their preparation for a blessed eternity. This work may be called "a new work." I know not that any thing of the kind has been attempted amongst us. It is designed, under the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be of particular and lasting use to the members of the Lord's New Church.—Hence it is intended to direct and stimulate, advise and warn them, in all the various states through which they may pass, and in every character, office, relation, and situation, they may be called to fill. In short, I please myself with the earnest hope, that this volume will be found, in the hands of New Church Christians,

A MANUAL OF EDIFICATION, SPIRITUAL BENEFIT, AND
HEAVENLY USE!

"All souls are the Lord's." All are the objects of his mercy. I would therefore pay no undue respect or deference to persons, but, under Divine assistance, "speak the truth in love," with all freedom and sincerity. In every section of this work, I have had a single eye to the success of the Lord's Church, and the spiritual good of my brethren.

We should ever bear in mind that the dispensation or church now commenced, is the most holy and exalted of any that have existed since the most ancient days; consequently, it is and will be expected that not only our principles, doctrines, and truths should be most holy and sublime, but also that the external life, conduct, and order of New Church Christians, as societies and as individual members, should be most exemplary, conscientious, and holy. Other denominations will mark our steps, and watch our lives; they will judge of our principles and our system, by our conduct and conversation in the world. And as we most assuredly ought to be such exemplary characters in all things, therefore in the following work I have, according to my ability, and in pure affection, endeavoured to mark out that line of conduct, in general and particular, in the greater and more minute circumstances of life, which will be calculated to dignify our profession, honour Jesus Christ our God, recommend our doctrines and truths to the notice of religious characters, and, at the same time, most effectually promote our own purification, peace, and happiness in this life, and our preparation for eternal felicity, use, and glory in the life to

come. I have found, now that a new dispensation has commenced, attended with so many extraordinary events, such wonderful discoveries, such astonishing displays of spiritual arcana and heavenly intelligence, that many minds are too ready to be carried away by the novelty of them, and to be lifted up and excited with a kind of natural delight and pleasure in making a profession of them, in conversing about them, with a warm zeal to make them known to others. All this is very well in its place; but we must not forget or neglect the grand design and end of these extraordinary favours, in respect to our own particular application of them in heart and life. For the grand—the divine end of them all, is to renew the heart; reform the life; and regulate the conduct according to the Divine laws and precepts of eternal truth. They are to regenerate the man, bring every principle and power, affection and thought, word and work, into the Divine order of a heavenly life; and thus to make us both internally and externally Christians,—true disciples and followers of Jesus Christ in body, soul, and spirit while here,—and pure and happy angels hereafter in the eternal kingdom of our God. When we seriously consider these great and glorious purposes, and that they cannot be effected but as, through the Divine aid, we co-operate with the Lord in opposing every evil, dying to self, with all its impure loves and concupiscences, resisting the hells, and faithfully, constantly, obeying the Divine laws of Jesus Christ, we shall see the necessity, the essential importance of that external conduct and life I have affectionately and earnestly recommended to the attention and practice of my brethren. If this “LAST LEGACY” be calculated to excite in them a stronger aversion to every thing that is evil, a greater anxiety to depart out of it, and avoid that road, and every step of it, which tends to death; and to induce a sincere and ardent desire for that purity of heart and life, strict righteousness, and full conformity to the Divine will and laws of Jesus Christ which constitute the true character of a New Church Christian, then my earnest but humble endeavours will not be without their reward. That the Divine blessing may accompany the following pages,—that they may be received in as much good will and pure love, as the writer feels in presenting them, and that they may be truly and spiritually useful to all who read them, is the devout and ardent prayer of,

Dear Brethren,

Your aged Friend, Brother, and Minister

In the faith and life of

The Lord's New Church,

J. PROUD.

CONTENTS.

SECTION.	PAGE.
I. General Address	1
II. To Ministers and Leaders of Societies	5
III. The General Conference, Association, or Assembly	10
IV. Union of Sentiment	12
V. The Doctrines, Truths, and Principles of the Lord's New Church	14
VI. Divine Worship, and especially Public Worship	19
VII. The State of Mind, Manner, and Effect of Public Religious Worship	22
VIII. Church Discipline	30
IX. The Obligations, Duties, and Uses of Members of the New Church	33
X. Members who are Opulent; or who occupy Superior Situations in Life	37
XI. Married Members of the New Church	42
XII. The Conjugal or Married State	48
XIII. To Parents on their Parental Duties	49
XIV. To Masters and Mistresses in the New Church	55
XV. To Young Persons of the New Church, Male and Female, who are Unmarried	59
XVI. Recreations, Pleasures, and Amusements	68
XVII. The Conduct of New Church Christians in the World, and their various Concerns with Mankind	72
XVIII. Company and Conversation	78
XIX. The "Proprium" of Man, sometimes designated the "Selfhood"	84
XX. Taking up the Cross and following the Lord	89
XXI. To the Poorer Members of the Church	95
XXII. Time and Talents,—their Improvement and Application	100
XXIII. Spiritual Means and Mercies, and their Right Application	106
XXIV. The Pursuit of Religious Information and Spiritual Knowledge, and the Proper Motive therein	114
XXV. The nominal and the real Member of the New Church	122
XXVI. Dependence upon the Lord, and Resignation to His Divine Will and Providence	127
XXVII. The Holy Word	135
XXVIII. A Caution against an Evil Life of Sin, and an Exhortation to a Life of Righteousness	145

SECTION.	PAGE.
XXIX. Detraction, Evil Speaking, and Defamation	152
XXX. Enthusiasm	155
XXXI. The Principles from which the Things of this Life are pursued, and the too great anxiety to obtain them	159
XXXII. The Separate Worship of the New Church	165
XXXIII. Distinguishing the New Church at its Commencement from all other Religious or Christian Denominations	168
XXXIV. The True and Genuine Religion of New Church Christians	173
XXXV. Death and Resurrection	182
XXXVI. The State of the New Church Christian in the World of Spirits; and his Entrance into the New Heavens	189
XXXVII. Conclusion	198

THE
AGED MINISTER'S LAST LEGACY.

SECTION I.

GENERAL ADDRESS.

WHEN a person is advanced in life to an age between seventy and eighty, it is high time for him to make his last Will and Testament ; and while of sound mind and memory, to dispose of his property in the best manner his judgment will admit of, so that neither himself, nor his relatives, may have cause to regret that he postponed the business until he became incapable of doing it properly. Being, therefore, advanced to the above-mentioned age, and feeling it my duty to dispose of the little spritual property with which Divine Providence has blessed me, among my spiritual kindred, I now take up my pen, to make my "LAST WILL."

First, then, my brethren, I have the happiness of congratulating you as the subjects of a dispensation, Church, and Kingdom, superior to every other which has existed since the most ancient days,—a dispensation replete with glory, excellence, grandeur, spiritual wealth, and true felicity, not only beyond my imperfect language to describe, but also beyond the most sublime eloquence of the brightest and wisest angel in the heavens. The blessed day is arrived in which divine prophecy and prediction relative to the last Church and Kingdom of our God on earth is fulfilled and fulfilling ; the precursor and messenger of the LORD's Second Advent has received his message and faithfully delivered it to men. The writings of this highly illuminated author carry upon the very face of them, the stamp of their divine commission. The opposition they meet with, is, indeed, a presumptive proof of their truth, and an evidence that they came from that infinitely wise and merciful Jehovah, to whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years ; who has long since proclaimed to the human race, that "An angel should say

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in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell upon the earth."* We are no longer at a loss to understand our blessed Redeemer's words in Matt. xxiv. throughout the whole of that chapter, and particularly the 29, 30, 31 verses. We are enabled to see in the clear light of heaven's eternal Sun, that the former Dispensation and Church is come to its consummation and end. The Revelations of John, which wholly relate to the decline, consummation, and judgment of the Church, with the formation of a new heaven and a new Church, as particularly described in the 21st chapter, are subjects now plainly revealed and made known. The events which have taken place in the Christian world, are confirming proofs that John's Revelations are fulfilled, and that the New Jerusalem is descending from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. The last Dispensation is commenced. A New Church actually exists; and the New Jerusalem appears in the world. To our unspeakable felicity, we are permitted not only to behold these wonders of Infinite Wisdom and Love, but are permitted to enter into the New Kingdom, enjoy its superlative blessings, and exult in the assurance, that it shall spread far and wide, shine forth in meridian glory, renovate the world, and stand for ever!

The causes from which preceding churches and dispensations have come to their end, we are well acquainted with, and equally well assured that those causes shall never exist in the Church now established. And why they shall not, I cannot mention without experiencing those feelings of thanksgiving, gratitude, and joy, which I am unable to express in words. Never shall that fundamental, that awful error exist in THIS Church, which has devastated and destroyed the former, by laying the foundation of, and introducing a long list of false doctrines and human inventions, which have spread over the Christian horizon, and veiled every ray of genuine truth from the intellectual eye of man:—I mean the doctrine of a Trinity of Divine persons, introduced and established at the Council of Nice in the fourth century. Only believe in and establish the doctrine of three Gods—or what is the same—three divine persons or beings, each of whom is distinctly and separately God and Lord—and then the door is opened to every falsehood and perverted sentiment the mind of man can invent and propagate, because it is congenial with, and calculated to indulge, the love of self, of the world,

* Rev. xiv. 6.

of dominion, and temporal advantage. Delivered from this fatal error, we are now assured the blessed day is arrived in which the LORD "will shew us plainly of the Father."* The Divine Trinity in One Divine person, and that person the Lord Jesus Christ in his Divine Humanity, is made as plain to the intellectual eye from the Word of eternal truth, as that there is a finite trinity in every man, consisting of soul, body, and operation; or, in fact, as plain as that there is an omnipotent Jehovah who created the world, redeemed the human race, and preserves them by his power. I shall not attempt here to prove this important and all-essential subject, that being already done in the writings of our illuminated author, EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, who presents therein the most solid, rational, and Scriptural demonstration that there is but One God in One Divine person, in whom centres the whole Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that God the LORD Jesus Christ, the invisible Jehovah of the Old Testament, manifested in his Glorified Humanity as the visible Jehovah of the New; and so convincing is the evidence furnished, that his readers must either obstinately close their eyes against divine truth; or, in humility of soul, bow the knee to Jesus Christ, confess Him the only God of heaven and earth, and in future devote their hearts and their lives to his will and laws, as the Divine source of all their mercies, their life, their happiness, and their heaven for ever. But, my brethren, when we reflect not only upon the manifestation of this most essential truth, and that we are now enabled to know, worship, and love the One Only True God as a Divine Man, in first principles and in last, the Alpha and the Omega, but also to take into our astonished view the sublime discoveries brought to light in these latter days, through the unspeakable mercy of our God in making known to us the divine science of correspondences, and thus disclosing the internal and spiritual sense of the holy Word as written agreeably to that science; in discovering to us the true nature of the Christian religion from its interior principles to their ultimate operation and effects; in opening to us the knowledge of the world of spirits; heaven and hell; the soul of man; what he is as a spiritual being, and the true nature of his resurrection; and indeed every other spiritual subject relative to our present peace, comfort, and illumination; and our state in the future life in the world to come;—when I say, we reflect upon these inestimable favours, in what a new and animating

* John, xvi. 25.

light does every circumstance relating to the LORD's Church and Kingdom appear to the mind ! The holy Word of divine Revelation is beheld in its own superior splendour : not a cloud hangs over it, or intervenes to prevent its enlivening beams from illuminating the understanding, or from elevating the heart to its Divine Author. Its essential doctrines ; its saving truths ; its pure laws of divine order ; are now seen and known to proceed from the bosom of that God whose esse is Infinite Love, and whose essence is Infinite Wisdom. We perceive that they are revealed to man in pure mercy and compassion, in order to shew him his state, bring him back to the centre and source of his felicity, and constitute him a glorified angel in the kingdom of his Heavenly Father. Every part of this divine Word when thus laid open in its internal sense, displays to us the character, attributes, and perfections of Jehovah our creator, redeemer, and saviour ; and teach us that in Him there is no wrath, anger, fury, vengeance, and vindictive justice ; that he is not a hard master, or partial in his favours ; that he does not ordain a few to be happy, while he decrees millions to eternal misery and hell, as if he were an arbitrary unfeeling sovereign ; but, on the contrary, that "He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works ;" * that he desires the salvation of every human soul, and raises to Himself and heaven all who can be made happy consistently with the free constitution of intelligent beings, and his own unchangeable and eternal laws of order. Add to these inestimable vouchsafements of heaven, the prospects now set before us by the revelation—ever consistent with the holy Word,—of the state of man immediately after bodily dissolution ; his entrance into the world of spirits as a real, living, substantial man, with every power, faculty, and sense, to associate with spirits and live for ever, and if in a state of preparation by having undergone the regenerating process in the world, he shall then enter the new heavens†, be united with angels, be an angel himself, dwell in the presence of his adorable LORD, and be a useful, glorified, and perfectly happy being in that kingdom to all eternity ! Taking these most animating prospects into our view,—considering also the infinite goodness of Jesus Christ in leading us to a reception of them,—how great, how immense must be our obligations to adore his holy name, love him with all the heart, and surrender our souls and bodies with all their powers, to his blessed will and laws ! Surely our obligations to be the most

* Psalm cxi. 9.

† Rev. xxi. 1.

exemplary Christians in the world, must be evident to every serious mind. As a member of this most holy and glorious Church, and especially as an aged minister in it,—having stood fifty years in that sacred office, and near thirty of them in this New Church, and reasonably expecting my continuance in this world will shortly be at an end,—I not only conceive it my duty to leave behind me this testimony of my firm and unshaken faith in the existence of this Church, and in all those doctrines, truths, and subjects which constitute it; but also my full conviction and assurance that EMANUEL SWEDENOR was the faithful messenger and servant of JESUS CHRIST—was peculiarly prepared by his immense erudition, and directed, and inspired to write those theological works which are published in his name, and which works are the medium, in the LORD's hand, of introducing his Second Advent into the soul of man, by opening the internal and spiritual sense of the holy Word, and of enlightening humble and sincere minds into the knowledge of the One True God, pure scriptural religion, and the eternal salvation of their souls. And I am fully persuaded that these writings will be handed down to posterity from age to age, as a most precious and invaluable gift from God our Saviour to his poor, erring, and fallen children, to guard them from spiritual darkness, infidelity, and evil! It is not the man we revere, or consider in any higher light than a faithful, humble, and illuminated writer and servant of Jesus Christ—as such we receive his message.—Thus also, we believe what is delivered by the Prophets and Evangelists, but it is not the men, it is the truth they have delivered, we revere, and the Divine Author of that truth we adore and serve. I shall now arrange the little spiritual property I have to dispose of, and offer each item to the acceptance of my beloved Legatees, as particularly specified in the following pages.

SECTION II.

TO MINISTERS AND LEADERS OF SOCIETIES.

EVERY institution of a public nature requires distinct offices, and persons to fill them with qualifications and talents best adapted to the duties required. And if in civil and wordly institutions care be taken to make choice of and appoint persons of

suitable talents and abilities to fill the offices of such institutions, how much more so in a religious, spiritual, and divine institution, such as the Church, in which not merely the temporal interest and prosperity of men are to be promoted, but their spiritual, and eternal prosperity and happiness!

It would give me very sincere pleasure to see an academy or academies established in the New Church, to instruct young persons in the languages, and in every other department of science necessary to their becoming useful in society, and qualified for any important office which their learning, talents, and abilities might enable them to fulfil. But admitting they pass through such a previous useful education, I cannot say that I think this to be the whole of what is necessary to prepare a person for, or constitute him a proper and approved minister of the New Church :—It appears to me, from the writings of our author, that all the preachers in the new heavens are of the LORD's appointment; consequently they are the subjects of his divine approbation, and therefore every way qualified for the office and the work in which they are engaged. The New Church on earth is one with that in the heavens. It is in conjunction with the Lord Jesus Christ, and under his peculiar care, direction, and government. It is therefore a fixed sentiment with me, that no man is a divinely approved and appointed minister of the New Church, except he be in an humble and renewed state of mind, and is led by the Divine Providence, in various ways, to incline to the work of the ministry, and by a peculiar influence is preparing, and prepared, for that sacred office. Under this influence from above, he feels his mind impressed with a strong desire and ardent affection to go forth into the LORD's vineyard and become the servant of his Church, and devote his time, talents, and abilities to the dissemination of divine truth, and thus to promote the good of his fellow-immortals, the increase of the LORD's kingdom, to the glory and honour of his adorable name, and this apart from all interested and selfish views, as to temporal emolument, dignity of station, the praise of men, or any merely worldly consideration whatever. The man who comes forth in this way as a minister, is, I conceive, of the LORD's choice and appointment; will be endowed with gifts and talents suited to his work and office; and be an approved, a useful, and a worthy minister in the New Church. Should he be in some degree a learned man, acquainted with languages, the sciences, and the different departments of useful

knowledge peculiar to the present world and state, these attainments, no doubt, might be employed with considerable advantage in the service of his Divine Master ; but all these latter united in one person, I say again, cannot constitute him a faithful and divinely chosen minister of the LORD's Church. In addition to these outward acquirements he must be a truly spiritual man ; acquainted with spiritual scientifics and knowledges, and the various stages, states, and changes in the regenerate life ; his life's love must be devoted to the sacred work, and under a peculiar influx and illumination from Jesus Christ to discharge his duties faithfully, from pure motives, and to the right end. Such a minister will deserve the respect and esteem of his brethren ; and it would be well for him to be at liberty from all worldly incumbences, by being decently provided for by the Church ; that so he might improve his talents, discharge his duties with comfort, and thus be more abundantly useful from being at liberty to devote all his time and energies to his ministerial duties.

You, my brethren, who are ministers will acknowledge with me, that the sacred office we fill is one of the most important in which a rational being can be engaged. It is neither to be lightly taken up nor carelessly discharged. A faithful minister is an ambassador of the LORD,—a labourer in his vineyard,—a servant to his Church,—and a herald to proclaim and announce the will of his Master. He is called a shepherd, a watchman, and an overseer. He is commanded to go forth and preach the gospel of his LORD, build up his Church, teach the truth, lead to the good of life, admonish, reprove, and exhort. He is solemnly charged to be faithful, to give warning to all, lest by his neglect, any should die in their iniquities. From these considerations it is most evident, that a true minister has a work to do, duties to discharge, and stands in a situation between God and man of the most solemn character, and involving the most weighty obligations. And here I must say, that I fear some Christians, even of the New Church, think too little of all this, and do not properly estimate the weight and importance of the duties of the ministerial office. It may be thought by some, that if the minister enter the pulpit on a Sunday and deliver a discourse or two, he has done his work, and has nothing more to do till the Sunday again returns. But I am assured from example, divine testimony, and long experience, that the work of a minister embraces many more duties and subjects than merely writing or delivering a sermon. If he be in any just

sense, and in any degree an ambassador, a labourer, a servant, a herald, a shepherd, an overseer, a watchman, a leader, a minister, a workman, &c., I might leave you to consider the sacredness of his office,—the nature of his duties,—the extent of his labours,—the importance of his uses, with the consequences which attend them ; the solemn account he will have to give before the supreme head of the Church, His Divine Master, the great shepherd of souls, who qualified and appointed him to faithfully minister in the Church, and lead the flock of his charge to the kingdom of heaven ! Therefore I sincerely hope the ministers and members of the New Church in general will take into serious consideration the true nature, duties, and importance of a New Church minister, together with the talents, qualifications, and abilities essential to the office and its work : and that they will be very deliberate, take sufficient time, and be well acquainted with the character, conduct, spiritual state, and apparent motives of any person who is proposed to be ordained. And as to those who are candidates for the ministry, whether by the wish of a society or by their own desire to assume the office, I hope they will never put themselves forward, appear anxious for ordination, or be in a hurry to obtain it, but rather that they will approach the solemn engagement with a holy fear, lest they should prove unworthy of or not sufficiently qualified for a work which embraces so many important duties, and upon the faithful and able discharge of which eternal consequences depend. It gives me pain when I find a person who has stood up a few months in the pulpit as an occasional preacher, anxious to be ordained, putting himself forward, active amongst his favourites, and by secret as well as open means, endeavouring to accomplish his purpose. It is a proof to me in such a case, that there is a want of self-knowledge, and that pride, a desire for exaltation, or some temporal motive, is predominant. I therefore earnestly request my brethren in the ministry, and also the societies of the New Church, to exert themselves, use their influence, and take particular care that not any person be introduced as an ordained minister until his situation and character be well known ; or until his qualifications, talents, and abilities be tried such a sufficient length of time, that there is every reason to conclude that he will be a spiritual, able, and useful minister, to the advantage, success, and honour of that blessed and holy Church in which he is to labour.

Were I in a particular manner to notice the life and duties,

the oppositions and trials of a faithful minister, it would occupy too large a space. I shall therefore only add, that it will be expected of a minister that his life be an example to his brethren in the LORD ; that in private, in his family, in the church, and in the world, he exhibit those graces and virtues which he recommends to his people ; that he be meek, humble, and condescending ; diligent and zealous in his office ; and while devoting his time and talents to the work he has to do, looking up to the Lord Jesus Christ for direction, assistance, and blessing, in discharging his duties ; acknowledging from the heart, that every good gift, talent, and use, as well as faithfulness therein, are derived from the LORD only, and to Him devoutly giving all the merit, thanksgiving, and praise.

Such a minister, finding his satisfaction and delight in the work—in doing good—being useful—promoting the eternal happiness of his fellow-immortals—the success of the Church, and in honouring the name of his Divine Master, will assuredly enjoy his divine approbation ; have a blessed reward in his own breast ; and be crowned with a reward unspeakably greater in the new heavens of his Father and his God !

You, my brethren, who fill this sacred office, will permit an aged minister who has had the honour to labour therein fifty years, to remind you, that although your office is holy, your work important, your duties extensive, and your trials many, nevertheless, being faithful, you will have strength to do and to bear, divine wisdom to guide, divine power to aid, and divine love to crown your souls with the approbation, presence, and kingdom of Jesus Christ your God, the supreme object of your adoration, your service, and your love !—We can ask no more ! And may our most holy and all-merciful LORD, who is the only source and giver of all our talents, good uses, faithful labours, and humble endeavours to promote his cause and honour his name, have all the thanksgiving, praise, and glory ! And may he of his infinite mercy preserve you faithful to the end, and then give you the crown of felicity in his own new heavens for ever !

SECTION III.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE, ASSOCIATION, OR ASSEMBLY.

THE object of this section is to state the importance of general Conferences,—the subjects for their consideration,—and the uses resulting from them.

In the first place, if a firm and general union of the New Church as a spiritual, well-formed, and compact body, be essential to its prosperity, order, and increase, it must be admitted that a General Conference or Meeting of that body, at certain stated times, is of considerable importance. For how is it possible for any numerous society of people engaged in a common cause, to promote its prosperity, insure its success, or accomplish the great objects for which it is formed, unless the understanding, wisdom, and talents of those who compose it are unitedly employed for that purpose? And how shall they be effectually employed in any better way, or indeed in any other way, than by assembling at certain times the most experienced and able members to consult, deliberate, and determine upon such plans and measures as are best calculated to answer their useful and laudable intentions? It must therefore evidently appear, that as in the LORD's New Church the greatest, most spiritual and heavenly uses are to be effected for the eternal good of the whole body in general, and every individual member down to the least and lowest among them, so it is essentially necessary not only that the whole should be firmly united, but also that General Conferences should be regularly established and annually continued; for by this means the wisdom and talents of the Church may be concentrated, and employed and exerted to accomplish every necessary purpose for the prosperity, order, and happiness of the Church, and every society of which it is constituted. Indeed it appears impossible that the New Church should prosper, or be established in any degree of general order, or appear respectable as a Church, until it be united and stand forth visibly as the true Church of Jesus Christ, by means of regular Associations or Conferences properly attended and supported. We know that the Apostles and primitive disciples of Jesus Christ were thus united as a visible Church, had their Conferences or assemblies, and therein consulted the good of the whole body, and formed rules and regulations for its government,

order, and success. All religious denominations in the present age have their general Assemblies or Associations, whether Presbyterians, Independents, Methodists, Baptists, or Quakers. Their example and the good effects arising from these general meetings are sufficient to convince us of their utility and importance, and how necessary it is for us to proceed in a similar manner. I sincerely hope, therefore, that, as our Conferences are commenced, they will continue, and be maintained in a truly Christian spirit, united with an animated zeal, and become the happy and effectual means of bringing every society and member of the New Church into a close, firm, and lasting union as one religious body, and as the visible, orderly, and exemplary New Church of Jesus Christ, divinely called the New Jerusalem !

The subjects which necessarily demand the attention of a General Conference are many and important. They refer to the prosperity of the Church and the eternal good of man, and consequently they include every thing of a general nature belonging to Christian societies. It is unnecessary to enumerate the subjects which may properly come under the consideration of a General Conference as the only proper place for their discussion. Many of these subjects will spontaneously present themselves to every judicious member of the Church, such as the order of the ministry—ordination forms—general rules and regulations for the Church—plans for preserving unanimity and harmony in the whole body—methods for advancing the cause—the dissemination of the doctrines—circulating the writings—maintaining good order—guarding against hurtful innovations—settling divisions—forming general laws—assisting societies under spiritual and temporal difficulties—correspondence with the brethren in other parts of the globe—external worship—proper forms of worship, and, in general, adopting every prudent measure for preserving the spirituality, the peace, and the honour of the Church. When all the societies thus become one united body or Church, then each society will see it necessary, no doubt, to send to the General Conference their minister or leader, and representatives. Hereby every rule, order, act, and deed of the Conference, will be the act and deed of the whole Church in general, and of each society in particular, and hence to some extent all will see their obligation to abide by the rules of Conference, because made and confirmed by their own assistance, consent, and approbation. Hence, my brethren, you must clearly perceive what great and extensive uses will arise from

such a union of the Church, by means of a regular, well-attended, spiritually-minded, and intelligent Conference : and here I will close with remarking, that the useful qualities exhibited in the acts of a Conference, will depend upon the character of the representatives sent by the societies ; and surely I need not press upon the societies the necessity of their selecting for this duty, such persons only as are best fitted for the work, if such are able to attend ; and if none such are able to attend, it is worse than useless to send those who are incompetent, whether with or without expense. Every man has his proper sphere of use, and all are not equally fitted for that of representative to the General Conference.

SECTION IV.

UNION OF SENTIMENT.

IT is a peculiar feature of the New Jerusalem Church, that it will never come into a state of consummation or end, but will increase, and stand for ever. This is a point or subject which cannot but afford great consolation and joy to the truly Christian mind. But although the Church in general, and as a Church, shall never be subject to this awful event, nevertheless particular societies may not stand quite so secure. It may at first view be thought that the subject of this section is of minor consideration, and not so important as to require a particular attention. But from observation and experience I am convinced we cannot well be too attentive to it. Whatever has a tendency to divide the judgment, has most commonly a tendency to divide the affections. You rarely see two persons of different opinions as to some religious doctrine or sentiment, so closely united in friendship, affection, and personal intercourse as when it is otherwise. They are shy and reserved with each other ; while each will be likely to endeavour to promote his own favourite sentiment, gain proselytes, and strengthen his own cause by the acquisition of numbers. In like manner, through differences of opinion a society becomes divided into two parties. Those who have introduced a new sentiment are warm in its defence, and frequently more tenacious in defending and propagating it than they are in preserving the peace of the society, the union of its members, and the righteous-

ness of its conduct and life. It may perhaps be supposed, that as the holy Word is now understood, both in its literal and spiritual meaning, and the eternal truths therein clearly manifested, and a superior illumination given, religious errors, false doctrines, and human inventions, will not appear in the New Church. But facts already demonstrate that such a supposition is not in accordance with the actual nature of man. Those facts render it necessary that we should be upon our guard, watch over one another, and particularly over the essential doctrines and truths, laws, and ordinances of the Church, that they be not superseded or perverted by any kind of unwarrantable innovation. While the Church, or any society of it, firmly maintains the principles, doctrines, and truths upon which it is founded, and the life of the members corresponds therewith, all will be peace, harmony, and prosperity. Pure affection will unite the whole body, and no avenue be left open for the enemy to enter ; but let the least deviation from the doctrines or opposition thereto take place, and the door is open for an intruder, and when he has gained a footing he will soon introduce others, until the peaceable, orderly, and beautiful temple becomes the habitation of disorder and the abode of anarchy and confusion ! Excepting the blessing of being free from the open evils and iniquities of life, I know not what is more essential to the prosperity of the true Church, than the preservation of it from hurtful errors, false doctrines, and unscriptural sentiments. We have the holy Word, with the writings of our author to direct us. Here is the fountain of living waters ; to this we must go for instruction ; here we must find the truth, and upon the literal sense of the word, rightly interpreted, must be founded all the doctrines and truths, laws and subjects of the LORD's Church upon earth. Whatsoever is not found and clearly manifested in this divine source of infallible information, we must reject and oppose, from whatever quarter it may come, or whoever may be the bearer of it. Love is our principle, and truth is our standard, and like brave veterans with prowess undaunted, we must drive out and repel every daring enemy, or insidious foe, from the city of our God. It is allowed by all the recipients of our heavenly doctrines, that the eternal truths of divine revelation are the source of whatever relates to faith and life, and also that the divine Word is now opened in its internal and spiritual sense in the writings of the illuminated SWEDENBORG ; and consequently, from this divine source we are to derive every principle, doctrine, and sentiment of a religious

nature. Now if this be admitted, as it surely will by every New Church Christian, how plain is it that we are to reject every doctrine and sentiment which has not its foundation in this infallible, all-comprehending, and eternal source of information. Our author has given us instructions to this end as follows : " Ministers ought to teach the people, and to lead them by means of truth to the good of life ; but still they ought not to force any one, since no one can be forced to believe contrary to what he thinks from his heart to be truth. He who believes otherwise than the minister [and the body of the church] and makes no disturbance, ought to be left in peace ; but he who makes disturbance ought to be separated, for this is agreeable to that order for the sake of which the ministry is established."*

SECTION V.

THE DOCTRINES, TRUTHS, AND PRINCIPLES OF THE LORD'S NEW CHURCH.

THE essential and genuine doctrines of the LORD's holy Word are now clearly laid before us, and their importance demonstrated to us, in the bright beams of heaven's illuminating and life-giving Sun. But it is one thing to have a general view, and another to enter into the particulars of these doctrines, so as to obtain a clear and spiritual perception of their infinite value, and their immense and everlasting consequences to our own souls.

We are now enabled to see by a light which cannot deceive us, that we have but One God in One Divine person to adore and serve, and that God the LORD Jesus Christ, or Jehovah in his Divine Humanity ; in whom centres the whole Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit—or essence, form, and operation. If we only take an external and general view of the doctrine, we shall deprive ourselves of much spiritual and important information which we should otherwise gain. It will therefore be expedient for us to consider first what the doctrine delivers us from ; and next what divine subjects it opens to our understandings, and brings home to our hearts.


This doctrine not only removes from the mind the unscript-

* *N. J. Doctrine*, 318.

tural and irrational idea of more Gods than one, with all the perplexity and embarrassment inseparably connected with it, but also relieves it from a multitude of sentiments equally unscriptural and erroneous. Having a just and distinct view of the one indivisible Jehovah, we are no longer confused with the idea of three Divine persons, each of whom is truly and distinctly God, nor with doubtful mind do we any longer consider which of the three we shall address in worship,—which we shall pray to,—or whether we shall offend one, or two, by praying more frequently to the other! The Sole Object of our worship is presented to our intellectual view as One God in One Divine person, in whom is the whole Trinity, and that God, Jehovah Jesus, in a divine-human form. Moreover we are no longer confused and perplexed concerning the proper nature, character, and attributes of a Divine Being, as must ever be the case with those who believe the Father to be a God of vindictive justice, or burning wrath—executing his vengeance, and displaying his fury upon poor frail, fallen creatures; and that an equal God or Divine person more merciful in his character, atoned his justice, appeased his wrath, reconciled Him to men, and purchased grace and heaven for their souls, by fulfilling the law in their stead, suffering as a sacrifice the punishment due to their sins, and working out a robe of righteousness for them to wear by imputation, that being covered therewith, they may stand spotless before the Father, be admitted into heaven, and be happy for ever!—We are also freed from the least degree of apprehension that so much as a shadow of truth exists in another horrid sentiment, namely, that Jehovah the Father ordained and decreed before the foundation of the world, that a certain number of the human race should be redeemed, saved, and raised to heaven; but that an immense number (far the greater proportion) should not be redeemed or saved, have no opportunity of escape, but be doomed to hell and damnation, there to remain in torment to all eternity! We are also relieved from the false and soul-destroying doctrine of justification by faith alone; and other doctrines equally false, and founded upon the idea of three Gods, or, what is the same, three Divine persons in the Godhead. Behold, my brethren, your peculiar mercies, and above all, gratefully rejoice in this essential and fundamental doctrine of all doctrines, that there is but One God, in One Divine person, and that God, Jesus Christ our LORD. Be thankful also, that you worship not an imag-

sonal God, without form or substance, having no other idea of Him than as infinite space, or of a Being, or rather a phantom, of which no idea whatever can be formed.

While we rejoice and give glory to the Divine Majesty of heaven, that we are totally freed from all these unscriptural sentiments and degrading ideas of the Deity, let us not forget the numerous truths that form the subjects of the soul-animating instruction we receive, as connected with, and flowing from, a right and just knowledge of the ONE TRUE GOD. While to thousands He is obscured by mazes of error, or enveloped in clouds of darkness; while inexplicable mysteries universally surround every idea of his essence and attributes; we are instructed by his infallible Word, and illuminated by that eternal Sun which is the proximate sphere of his glory, not only to know who the true God is, but also to become acquainted with his essence and his attributes. He stands revealed in the resplendent beams of his own adorable and Infinite Majesty, and those beams so attuned and accommodated by his Divine Humanity, that the intellectual eye can read his divine character, and behold his most lovely and soul-rejoicing attributes, in the superior light of a new and everlasting day!—He is seen, He is known, and He is enjoyed, by all the angels and good spirits in the heavens, and by every spiritual member of his New Church on earth, as a God of infinite love and wisdom, goodness and truth, mercy and compassion. His very *esse* is love, and His essence wisdom;—"He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."—He created the human race for happiness, and wills the salvation of every soul of man. In Him there is no vindictive justice, no wrath, no fury, no vengeance. All these are at an infinite distance from his all-perfect and holy nature. His every attribute is like—and is, indeed,—Himself,—as love, wisdom, goodness, power, justice, mercy, holiness, righteousness. They are, indeed, all summed up in His Omnipotent and Infinite Love and Wisdom; and are operative in every possible way, consistently with divine order, to bless, deliver, regenerate, and make eternally happy, every child of man! Therefore may glory and praise, adoration and honour, ascend to the throne of Jehovah Jesus, from the sanctified altar of every New Church Christian's heart, and find acceptance there as an humble offering to the God we adore, and serve, and love. It is, my brethren, this all-essential doctrine of the ONE TRUE GOD, which like the bright and glowing beams



of the sun in the morning of Spring, disperses the dark fogs of human invention; drives away the thick mists of error and falsehood from the horizon; and presents every delightful object to our view in the clear light of an unclouded day! Now every celestial and spiritual principle essential to the christian character, constituent of the true church, and the foundation of heaven and happiness, is plainly opened to the human understanding. Love to the LORD, and charity to man, long obscured, or rejected from religious systems as primary principles, are now restored to their lost dignity, are set before us in their own heavenly beauty, inspiring us with an almost resistless ardour, through the divine blessing, to make them our own, and to enjoy their immense beatitudes, their boundless never-ceasing delights and glories! The doctrines of repentance, reformation, faith, regeneration, and a good life, are no longer enveloped in shades, smothered with the dust of the religious jargon of mystery, or swallowed up by the all-devouring dogma of salvation by faith alone; but they stand in their right place, in just order, their real importance known, and their consequences understood; they are all essential to the christian character, to a preparation for heaven, and the enjoyment of its felicity. And while we see their true nature and importance, we equally perceive the power and assistance by which all good is effected in and by man. All merit is sincerely and totally disclaimed, and the glory given to Jehovah Jesus, the God of our salvation, and the sole giver of all that is good and true, pure and useful, whether wrought in man, or done by him, both here and to eternity. And not only are the great subjects of doctrinal and practical christianity clearly manifested, and laid open, but also the nature of the soul, and of its resurrection, the nature of the eternal world; the internal and spiritual sense of the Holy Word is also laid open by means of the divine science of correspondences, aided by the superior light of the LORD's Second Advent. These are important and most exhilarating subjects, which I have no need here to explain or demonstrate. We are all well acquainted with them, and rejoice in them, and especially have we cause to rejoice in the conviction, that every point of our faith has a direct practical tendency! How beautiful and how edifying are the clear parallels between the Divine Nature and ours! In tracing the Trinity in the LORD—of Love, Wisdom, and Operation, we are reminded that, in like manner, we must strive to unite in ourselves, the

corresponding one of charity, faith and good works : The LORD's glorification of His Humanity reminds us that our external man must be regenerated into the likeness of "the LORD's glorious body : " The union of the Divine and Human natures in the LORD, tell us of the necessity of our internal and external man being united, that so we may be a one, even as the Father and Son are One : while the temptation of the LORD, and his victories over the tempter, assure us that we must suffer with Him, or we cannot "be glorified together." How great are our privileges ! Every truth of the divine Word necessary to enlighten our understandings, inspire our hearts with love, and lead us in the sure way to the new heavens, is set before us in the bright light of a new, a spiritual, and everlasting day, in-somuch that with holy exultation, tempered with deep humiliation and thankfulness, we may say that the divine and eternal Word of Revelation, the heavens above, and the will, wisdom, love, and mercy of Jehovah Jesus, are now made manifest to every sincere, spiritual, and faithful subject of the LORD's New Church in this blessed day of his second appearing ! O that we may ever remember that our privileges and our responsibilities are in exact proportion ; and while our thankfulness is called forth by the one, may our conscientiousness be awakened by the other.

When, my brethren, our extraordinary mercies are devoutly considered, and we duly reflect that we are permitted to behold such glorious truths ; to receive them ; and thereby to enter into the LORD's New Church and partake her divine and eternal favours ; we must see how great our obligations are to be men of superior virtue, exalted self-renouncing christianity, and of righteous and heavenly lives. And when we take into view the animating prospects we have before us ;—the certainty of a glorious immortality ; our resurrection to eternal life, with all the beatitudes, uses, and felicities of the LORD's New heaven ; and that we shall live there so immediately after our removal hence, in substance, form, and powers, men complete, in all perfection, incapable of decay ; angelic beings in the presence and favour of our LORD ; surely we shall need no further stimulus, want no admonition, require no other motive, to be the sincere, the faithful, the orderly members of the LORD's New Church, while we are in the present world !

SECTION VI.

DIVINE WORSHIP, AND ESPECIALLY PUBLIC WORSHIP.

PUBLIC religious worship is a divine institution, appointed and commanded by the One True God, the only Object of religious reverence and adoration. From the earliest ages of the world down to the present time, religious worship has been observed by the various nations and tribes of the earth, and so far as it was orderly and good, was sanctioned and approved by the supreme Governor of the universe. Our blessed LORD, with his disciples, established the worship of the primitive Church, which has been continued as a divine appointment down to the present day, although much perverted from its original purity and order; and it cannot be rationally denied, that similar external worship is, by the same authority, to be continued in the New Church. The LORD says by the prophet Isaiah respecting this New Church, "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before me, saith the LORD."* Again, in the Apocalypse, "Who shall not fear thee, O LORD, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy, for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest."† But to adduce passages of scripture, and offer arguments in proof that external worship is of divine appointment and to be regularly continued in the LORD's New Church, is as unnecessary as to light a small candle to shew the sun when he shines at noon day without an intervening cloud! Neither shall I take up the time of my brethren by dwelling minutely upon the nature of religious worship, the importance of it, or the advantages resulting from a regular and faithful observance of it. The nature of religious worship will be perceived from the character of the great Object of worship. "God, (viewed in Himself) is a spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." They who worship Him in spirit and in truth, worship Him in love and faith. Consequently, those external forms of worship in which love and faith, or goodness and truth, are united, or which have

* Isaiah lxvi. 22, 23.

† Rev. xv. 4

their life from them, are approved by the LORD. The importance of worship arises not only from the divine appointment and command, but from several circumstances, some of which I shall notice as I proceed. Indeed the advantages and uses of external religious worship are numerous and everlasting. Not even an angel can adequately describe the extent, or the immense value, of the blessings arising from true external worship, when directed solely to the LORD Jesus Christ, or to Jehovah in His Divine Humanity!

But although public worship is of divine origin and appointment, and has been universally observed in all the revolutions of time; although it is so important in itself, its advantages so immense, that heaven and earth, angels and men, are equally engaged in it, unitedly saying with joyful hearts and cheerful voices, "O come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand*;" yet, nevertheless, there have been some, and some who profess to be members of the New Church, men in other respects useful and exemplary, who appear to consider public religious worship as a matter of indifference, which may or may not be observed, according as inclination or will may dictate! Some have been known to neglect such worship from year to year, when neither health, circumstances, nor situation could plead an excuse! Nay, this important duty has been treated almost as something beneath them, as if their states were too interior and superior to need the aids of such worship, or to require them to observe the public duties of "the LORD's day!" My brethren, these things ought not to be. Reason and Scripture, angels and innumerable truly christian men, exclaim against them. What God does not approve, man ought not to do, and I am sure God does not approve of the neglect of "the LORD's day." And as for those persons who give into these injurious views and practices, with their internal state I have nothing to do; but their outward proceedings and statements, I must oppose. The true external worship of the true God is at this day set before us as plainly as though it were written with the sun-beams of heaven. We cannot be unacquainted with it; but lest any one should be unacquainted with it, I shall cite the following passage from *The True Christian Religion, or Universal Theology of the New Church*, where the author is treating of the

* Psalm xcv. 6, 7.

command to keep holy the Sabbath-day. He observes; "When the LORD came into the world (and in consequence made all representations of Himself to cease) that day was made a day of instruction in divine subjects, and thus also a day of rest from labour, and of meditation on matters that concern salvation and eternal life; and also a day for the exercise of love towards our neighbour. That it was made a day for instruction in divine subjects, is evident from the fact, that the LORD on that day taught in the temple and the synagogues. That that day was also made a day for the exercise of love towards our neighbour, is evident from what the LORD both did and taught on the Sabbath day."*

Whether it be right, then, to neglect the worship of the New Church where it can be enjoyed, let every serious and conscientious Christian of that church judge and determine for himself. I am well aware, what arguments and excuses some persons who neglect it, will urge in favour of their conduct. But where is the man who will not furnish himself with arguments to justify himself, if possible, in the conduct he is disposed to adopt and pre-determined to pursue? It may be objected by these persons, that some of the forms of worship in use in the New Church, are not quite to their mind—the persons officiating, they have some objection to—and the place where they worship, they are not exactly satisfied with. But, my brethren, are these substantial objections or reasons? In reply to them, let me present the following words of Divine inspiration. "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name. Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."† "Forget thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for He is thy LORD, and worship thou Him."‡ These words will apply not only internally as to individuals, but also externally to the worship of the sanctuary. If Jesus Christ *be* my LORD, I am bound publicly, as well as privately, to acknowledge and worship Him *as* my LORD,—as that LORD who reigns in my heart, governs my life, and rules by his divine good and truth in every part of that worship I render unto his alone adorable and most holy name. If I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, a member of his Church, and a subject of his kingdom, is it possible for me to manifest that I am such in any better way, or so honourable to my LORD, as that of worshipping Him in his Church, and with his people, and consistently with the

* N. 301.

† Psalm xlix. 2.

‡ Psalm xlv. 11.

principles, the truth, and the light I have received from Him? Be it then the united endeavour of New Church Christians, not only to establish a pure order of external worship consistent with the pure doctrines and truths of the holy Word; but also to maintain and promote that worship by their personal example and influence, to the utmost of their power. Let them do the best that in them lies, in order that the New Church of Jesus Christ our God may become a respectable, and respected, visible Church in the world, and appear in its ultimate form with that decency, order, and glory, which corresponds with its heavenly principles, and its divine origin. Then shall the words of the Psalmist become applicable to it; "I the LORD have chosen this Zion, I have desired it for my habitation; this is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it."* And may we with joyful hearts and cheerful voices unitedly reply, "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name, bring an offering and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; fear before Him all the earth!"† Yea, my brethren, let us consider the infinite mercies we enjoy under this most glorious dispensation; the extensive, the spiritual, the eternal advantages to be derived to mankind from the weekly proclamation of the New dispensation; and how much we may contribute, by diligent attendance on church ordinances, to those blessed advantages and uses which will not be confined merely to our time, but continue and increase to a thousand generations. Let us unitedly stand forth the firm, the undaunted advocates of the LORD's cause, and by our lives, our example, our worship, our preaching, our talents, and all the powers we possess, exert ourselves to promote the Church, increase its numbers, and establish its glory, "until Jerusalem be made a praise in the earth!"‡

SECTION VII.

THE STATE OF MIND, MANNER, AND EFFECT OF PUBLIC RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

IN the former Section we have seen that public worship is of divine appointment and command, and therefore it is a duty

* Ps. cxxxii. 13 14.

† Ps. xcvi. 8 9.

‡ Isa. lxii. 7.

and service every New Church Christian is under an obligation to discharge, unless prevented by unavoidable circumstances. But this, like all other duties of a religious nature, may be neglected, or be very improperly performed, and consequently, no happy effects be produced from it. The STATE OF MIND in which we attend the worship of the LORD, is a subject for deep and serious consideration! I have had many opportunities of noticing the state of mind in which professing Christians appear to engage in worship; and out of my large experience I would remind you, in the first place, what that right and proper state of mind is in which we should engage in worship, so that you may see in a stronger light the impropriety and disorder of those opposite states, in which too many enter upon that sacred and important duty. If, upon this subject, we turn to the Word of the LORD we shall find the following instruction; "As for me, I will come into thy house, in the multitude of thy mercy, and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple."* "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."† "O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our maker."‡ "O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; fear before Him all the earth."§ "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool, for He is holy."|| "The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."¶ From these passages, and many more which might be adduced, we may discover what that state of mind is in which the LORD is to be worshipped. It can imply no less than a solemn reverential disposition of the soul; a truly spiritual humility; a deep sense of the divine mercy and goodness; a holy fear grounded in love; an approach to the Infinitely holy and blessed LORD with holy affections, holy thoughts, and holy desires, to glorify his name, praise Him for his mercies, and pray for the constant communication of his divine favour. Now, if such should be the state of mind in which we sincerely approach to worship the LORD, how should we on such occasions divest ourselves of all selfish and worldly affections, thoughts, and objects! How should we prepare ourselves by directing the mind to spiritual and divine things, elevating our hearts to

* Ps. v. 7.

† Ps. xxix. 2.

‡ Ps. xcv. 6.

§ Ps. xcvi. 9.

|| Ps. xcix. 5.

¶ John iv. 23, 24.

the LORD, his Word, his kingdom, and to those subjects which are calculated to feed, satisfy, enrich, and strengthen the spiritual man, in all that is of a holy, heavenly, and divine nature! If we always worshiped the LORD in this state, and in this manner, it is impossible to say what immense advantages and blessings we should receive. The heavens would be open to us; the angels would surround us; and the divine influx descend upon us with power. We should never wait upon the LORD without receiving new mercies, an elevation of state, and an increase of spiritual life. Yea, if we were SUCH worshipers, and enjoyed such favours, we should then delight in the public services, and should say with David, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the LORD!"* With what satisfaction and pleasure should we meet each other, and how would our devout praises, our ardent aspirations, and our humble sacrifices mingle together, and ascend before the eternal throne as a sweet and acceptable odour, conveyed in the golden censers of attendant angels. But is this the fact? Is this the way in which we all worship the LORD in his temple? I much fear it is not! What shall we say of those who come in a hurry and bustle into the house of prayer, without time or thought for previous preparation? How are their minds in a state for that most holy worship which alone can be approved by the LORD? And how many are there who profess to be the servants of Jesus Christ, and to adore his holy name, who, nevertheless, make it a custom to come late into his sanctuary, and even when nearly half the service is over! You will find in every place certain persons who constantly drop in when the duties are far advanced; and if you expect to see them sooner, you are sure to be disappointed. And some of these I have noticed enter so very carelessly, as if it were quite right, and quite soon enough. Again, there are those who acknowledge the importance of religious worship, and are even liberal in its pecuniary support, who, notwithstanding, are absent from the service as frequently as they are present. Moreover, I have known some few even to present themselves just before the sermon begins; and if you enquire the reason, you probably have this answer;—"Why, I do not much mind the previous service; I know what it is very well; but I like to hear the discourse provided the preacher be a good speaker; and, therefore, if I am early enough to hear that, I am satisfied." But is this, or any part of it, the

* Psalm, cxix. 1, 2.

true and spiritual, and acceptable worship of the LORD? Nay, verily, this habit of coming late is a gross breach of good manners, and common decency; as well as an ungrateful affront to the Divine Majesty. Hear what our illuminated author has said upon this subject. "The first commandment enjoins the worship of the LORD God. Whosoever possesses the life of love or charity, he worships the LORD God, because this is His life. The third* commandment enjoins the observation of the sabbath; whosoever is in the life of love or in charity, he keeps the sabbath holy, inasmuch as nothing is sweeter or more pleasant to him than to worship the LORD and glorify Him every day."† Who that is capable of these heavenly feelings, will ever become an irregular, or late attendant on public worship?

Can I then be wrong in reminding my Christian brethren of these improprieties and imperfections, and I might say—evils, relative to public worship? If we were commanded to appear at a certain hour before some great Emperor or mighty Potentate, seated upon his throne, surrounded with all the splendour and grandeur of his exalted station, should we not take care to be there in due time? should we not be well prepared, enter his presence with proper reverence, bow before him, and hear his will with the utmost attention?—But if called before him to receive some very great favour at his hand—somewhat to enrich, dignify, and make happy through life—with what humility, esteem, and thankfulness should we appear before him! with what delight should we receive the royal gift! But, my brethren, we are commanded to appear before the King of kings, and LORD of lords,—the "blessed and only Potentate" of the universe! Yea, before the infinitely wise, holy, all-knowing, Jehovah Jesus, before whom millions upon millions of happy spirits and exalted angels bow with profound reverence and awe, gratitude and delight, and receive unnumbered beatitudes from his all-bounteous hand. In our public worship we appear before this omniscient God—this almighty and ever-living Potentate,—who sees the heart, and knows all things in man! And we appear before Him as his poor ungrateful subjects, as the most needy and wretched supplicants—as beings who must perish in everlasting poverty, misery, and woe, unless He deign to hear our humble supplications, hold out the sceptre of his

* This is the fourth in the English division of the commandments.

† Arcana Celestia, 1798.

mercy, and is pleased to communicate salvation and eternal life to our souls ! When, therefore, we consider these things ; and moreover, that the true and spiritual worship of the LORD is ordained altogether for our benefit, that our souls may be rendered thereby more receptive of those celestial communications, divine favours, and heavenly qualities which are essential to our final felicity and everlasting residence in the LORD's kingdom and presence, one would conclude that the real Christian would, above all things, attend to, and delight in, the devout, sincere, and spiritual worship of Jesus Christ, his Father, and his God. What conscientious mind would like to have it truly said of him—" Mark this ! if he were to have to meet a profitable customer, go to a feast, or travel by coach, you would see him punctual enough ; but since he has ONLY to meet a God so good that he thinks he can take liberties with Him ; as the feast to which he is invited is ONLY an eternal and heavenly one ; as the journey he is setting out upon is ONLY a journey from a state of sin and misery to one of everlasting holiness and happiness ; he does not think it worth his while to be punctual in meeting his God ; accepting his bounty ; and seeking to grow into his likeness ! " Is this the boasted rationality of some people ? Does it amount to no more than this ?

Let, then, every one bear in mind, that no law, command, or ordinance, of the LORD is to be disobeyed or neglected with impunity. The regular, public worship of God is a solemn ordinance. It is the indispensable duty of every Christian to observe it ; and he who disobeys or neglects it, sins against God, manifests an unsanctified state of mind, and exposes himself to a loss which is unspeakable and everlasting ! I am earnestly solicitous that New Church Christians should sustain the dignity of their character, the purity of their profession, and enjoy the immense beatitudes of the LORD's New Kingdom. When I see them acting like thoughtless ill-instructed professors ; when I see that while they are tenacious of points of doctrine, zealous for truth, can talk well, and profess much, and yet at the same time they can live in the neglect of a known and obvious duty ; disregard the sacred ordinances of worship ; serve the LORD by halves ; and accommodate external religion to their own selfish will, instead of making their own will bend and bow down to the will and Word of Jesus Christ, I am led to doubt more or less the sincerity of their faith, the ardour of their love, and the reality of their profession. In our public

acts of religious worship, surely our minds should be collected, devout and serious; full of humility and love; earnestly desirous to offer up an acceptable sacrifice to the LORD, and to glorify his adorable name with a sanctified heart. The natural man, with all its belongings, should find its place under the feet, and the whole soul be devoted to the sanctity of the work, the holiness of the duties, and directed to the all-merciful and gracious LORD for His divine influx, presence, and blessing. We should never enter the temple of devotion without considering we are then entering more immediately into the presence of the King of kings and LORD of lords, to humble ourselves before his glorious throne, acknowledge our dependance upon Him, adore his Divine Majesty, and earnestly solicit his favour and mercy to our souls; as also to receive the instructions of his Word; be illuminated, comforted, encouraged, and re-animated by his Spirit; and elevated in affection and life to a nearer conjunction with his Divine Humanity, as our only true felicity and happiness for ever! and if such be the state of mind in which we should assemble before the LORD our God, we should come duly prepared for it by previous meditation and serious reflection, and thus approach in a truly spiritual frame, and not merely in compliance with custom, form, and habit. Whenever I stand up before a numerous, and serious congregation, all assembled for worship before the commencement of the service, I think I have before me one of the most pleasing, grand, and glorious scenes it is possible for the eye of man to behold!

Since, then, we should thus appear before the LORD, and in the state of mind I have endeavoured to describe, the manner of our worship should certainly correspond with the greatness of the purposes for which it was instituted. All should be consistent; we should be there in due time, that is, before the service commences; sit with seriousness; attend devoutly to every part of the service with holy fervour, and so conduct ourselves throughout the whole, as to afford an example of the true and becoming worship of the LORD. When we approach in this state of mind, and worship in this manner, the happy effects produced are greater than any pen can adequately describe. A few of these I will mention presently. I judge it right to notice first, that as to the manner or mode of our worship, there appears in my opinion, one very great defect. It is too com-

mon, both in praise and prayer, and especially the latter, for people to sit; now the external gesture should correspond with the internal feelings. It is not only indecorous, but irreverent to sit when we are humbly imploring the Majesty of heaven, for an eternal good! Where is the man who would dare thus to appear before an earthly king, when requesting a favour of him? In prayer to God we should kneel; to stand is better than to sit; but kneeling is the proper, and most reverent posture. In praise and singing sacred hymns, standing is the proper position, and should never be dispensed with except with those who are incapable of standing without real inconvenience. We are now made acquainted with the laws of divine order, the science of correspondences, the signification and importance of external things, as modes, ceremonies, and appearances, better than other denominations. We should therefore be peculiarly careful, that "all things be done decently and in order;" that every thing of religion in the external correspond with the internal, so as to appear holy, in divine order, and agreeable to the eternal Word.

As to the blessed effects arising from the ordinances of public worship when addressed exclusively to Jesus Christ our LORD, and when attended to in a right state of mind, and in a becoming manner, they must be unspeakably great. The ordinances of worship are, indeed, the very means appointed by the LORD, to open and prepare the mind for the reception of divine communications and blessings. I think our illuminated author has somewhere spoken to this effect; that "during the true worship of the LORD, when the worshiper is devout and sincere, although he may not at the time perceive or enjoy any particular edification or spiritual influence, nevertheless some state is then and thereby opened in him of the Lord, which shall be filled, or be filling to all eternity."—I cannot immediately refer to the passage, but this I believe to be the sense of it. And when we reflect that religious worship is calculated to preserve in the mind a reverence for the Divine Majesty; a solemn sense of the Divine presence; a grateful sense of the LORD's goodness and mercy, and of our entire dependance upon Him; and when we reflect that He is the Infinite source of all our blessings and favours, our life, and our happiness for ever; and that when we approach Him in humble faith and love, He will not withhold any real good or blessing from us, we may then assure ourselves

that when we thus "worship Him in spirit and in truth," the happy effects of that worship will be unspeakable, and everlasting!

If then, my brethren, we would honour the LORD our God, set a good example before men, improve our own states, and advance in faith, wisdom, and love; let us regularly worship the LORD in his sanctuary; attend in due time; go through the service in humility and devotion of heart and soul, earnestly looking up to our Heavenly Father and Saviour for his presence and blessing. When the worship is over, let us soberly retire in serious meditation; or if we engage in conversation, let it be, if possible, upon the divine things and subjects of the LORD's Word, worship, and kingdom; or at least something of solid use, and not vain and trifling. Then will the worship of the LORD communicate the blessings intended, and by thus "waiting upon Him we shall renew our strength; mount up with wings as eagles; run, and not be weary; walk, and not faint."* Thus also will those around us be led to conclude, that our doctrines, sentiments, worship, and profession are founded upon the Holy Word, because they perceive that our piety, regularity, righteousness, and the strict order of our conduct and life, are in conformity with the divine will, laws, and ordinances of Jesus Christ. We shall do well to bear in mind, that those opposed to our doctrines behold thousands alarmed at "the terrors of the LORD," and crowding eagerly at the shrine of their Tripersonal God, in the hope of changing his wrath to grace; and shall they be led by our neglect and coldness to smile with contempt at the reluctant homage we pay to the Infinite, impartial, unchangeable Mercy of the absolutely One God, whom we preach? as if that most pure doctrine had no other effect upon us, than to encourage us to take liberties with the service of a Master so kind and so gracious! so that what should have been to us the greatest possible claim to pious devotedness, is turned, by our meanness of soul, into an occasion for ingratitude, and criminal self-indulgence! These weighty considerations I must press earnestly upon my brethren, "whether they will bear, or whether they will forbear."

* Isaiah xl. 31.

SECTION VIII.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE is a subject I have perhaps seen as much of, and been as much acquainted with, as any person at present in the New Church. I have had the opportunity of observing and knowing the order of it, in various denominations of Christians. I have noticed that where the discipline has been the most correct and firmly maintained, the society has been preserved in the greatest peace, harmony, and good order; and also has appeared respectable in the same degree to those around it. Indeed, no considerable society, civil or religious, can long continue in peace and prosperity without good rules and regulations suitable to the nature and design of such society. And I think it will be acknowledged by every member of the New Church, that the discipline of a religious society ought to be the most correct, pure, and orderly of all societies. If this be admitted, what ought to be the discipline of the LORD's most glorious, and everlasting Church on earth? The principles, doctrines, and truths of this Church are divine and most holy. The life of her members must be consistent with the principles from which that life flows, and with the truths by which that life is to be directed and governed! Consequently, the discipline of this Church should be, not only most correct, but pure, scriptural, and heavenly. It is a bad omen when there is found in a society rather a repugnance and opposition to wholesome discipline than a desire for it. The idea must not be entertained that because a person is a recipient of our doctrines, and worships along with us, he is therefore a member of the Church, and that his principles and truths will sufficiently operate and be answerable for the regularity of his conduct and life. If nothing appears against his moral conduct, he may be admitted as a member; but is there nothing more to be said or done in regard to members when once admitted? Yea, verily; their after-conduct must be looked to; and none must be allowed to remain as members whose conduct has become inconsistent with the truths they profess, and whose life has become a dishonour to the blessed cause they espoused! Men may think as they please, but I am well assured that New Church Societies must have New Church Rules, or they will not,—they cannot pros-

per. These rules must, of course, be consistent with, and founded on, Divine Truth, and they should be so framed as to be of obvious utility. Above all things, care must be taken that no persons be admitted and acknowledged as members of the Church whose lives and conduct are not good. Neither knowledge nor talk, profession nor external uses, and least of all mere temporal wealth, will constitute any one a real member of the LORD's true Church. Nothing less than a renewed heart, a reformed and obedient life, united with a true faith, can constitute him a member. And since notwithstanding all possible care and attention such characters as are not good may enter in, and as such disorders and evils may, and, indeed, according to our LORD's words, "It must needs be that offences come," will take place; therefore, unless a proper discipline be maintained, disorder and division will be the consequence. The peace of the society will be interrupted; the minds of the pious and sincere grieved and disturbed; the success of the cause retarded; and a dark shade will be cast over its respectability and purity! We well know the proud heart of man cannot brook restraint; the stubborn proprium is averse to reproof and admonition; and the merely external professor who seeks to be in appearance what he is not in reality, will be offended if his evils are made known; and the more so if reproved for them; and still more if dealt with according to good order and the dictates of eternal truth. But we are not to pay so much deference to an unsound member of the body as to let it remain without healing or amputation, till it corrupts the whole body, or, by its putrefaction, endangers the general health and happiness. We are to act in the name of the LORD; and as subjects of his kingdom, we must do all in our power to preserve the Church in its purity; remove its evils; eject its enemies; encourage its exemplary members; and maintain order and peace, obedience of life, and holiness of conduct; that the Church collectively, like the individual member, may be the temple of the Holy Spirit, a house of prayer, the habitation of Jehovah in his Divine Humanity, and not a den of thieves. It may be thought by some, that the discipline of which I am treating is by far too strict and severe; that I wish to lay a burden upon the shoulders which is unnecessary; that the doctrines and truths we profess are quite sufficient to influence and controul our conduct and life, without any rules laid down by a religious society; and therefore we must

beware of a sectarian or puritanical spirit. This objection may probably originate with persons who, before they received the doctrines of the New Church, had not been closely connected with any religious society, had made no particular profession, but mingled with the world, and supported a fair character, and an external morality, and supposed that this was all that constituted the Christian. But I am addressing those who know what true Christianity is, and that it is as far above, and superior to, what is called a fair character and a decent morality, as heaven is above and superior to the earth. And when we consider in what an impure state internally individuals may enter the Church,—especially considering the age we live in, the strength of man's proprium, the bias of his natural affections, the effect of the world and its connections, with the influence of infernal spirits,—we shall see a powerful reason, and a pressing necessity, for establishing those rules and laws of discipline which lay a restraint upon the natural man; but which the truly spiritual man will always highly approve and strictly conform to with freedom of mind, and with full satisfaction and pleasure. Indeed, were there no such rules in existence, he would do the acts they require of him as a Christian, and therefore he cannot entertain any objection to the establishment of such rules. We are not yet in heaven, nor as yet constituted angels. We have, as it were, just emerged out of the Egyptian hells. We have a wilderness to travel through, and a process of purification to be accomplished, before we can enter the heavenly Canaan, or enjoy the angelic state. The sincere and truly good man will be thankful for every means, rule, and order, which has a tendency to check the irregular sallies of the natural mind; prevent his rambling from the straight line of duty; and facilitate his progress to, and prepare him for, the Divine centre of his felicity, and the kingdom of his God. The Church on earth is the sanctuary in which Jesus Christ dwells, and I am well assured that every true member of it who loves the LORD, and desires to dwell where the LORD is, can say with Peter, "It is good for us to be here;" and with him will also be ready to "build the tabernacles of the divine residence," keep the sanctuary clean from everything that would offend the Object of his love, and unite with his brethren to do all in his power toward preserving in its holiness, order, and beauty, the "Zion which Jehovah in his Divine Humanity has chosen for his habitation," that he may still

say, "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell for I have desired it."*

Be it then the united wish, the combined endeavour of all New Church Christians, to devise, adopt, and observe such rules, laws, and regulations in each society, as that the Church shall correspond with its predicted character, where it is said, "In the last days the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the TOP of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."† And may we all labour to bring it into such a state of purity and divine order, that upon every altar may be written—"holiness to the LORD;" and upon the gate of the temple,—“Jehovah there.”

SECTION IX.

THE OBLIGATIONS, DUTIES, AND USES, OF MEMBERS OF THE NEW CHURCH.

THE doctrines and truths we profess are very explicit upon the duties and uses which belong to the New Church and its members; but long experience and observation have convinced me, that admonition, advice, and exhortation are not quite unnecessary even in a Church where divine truth shines so obvious, and the light of heaven is so resplendent and glorious.

I presume there is hardly a society of the New Church but what has formed general rules and regulations for its government; and probably its members have chosen certain serious and judicious individuals as a committee to transact the business concerns of the Church. Now such a committee will of course adopt rules of order suited to the office they sustain; they will have a work to do, and duties to perform for the society. But should these persons pay no attention to the rules, neglect their work, and cease to discharge their duties, what would be the consequence? Certain disorder would take place—the society would be injured—some members would be offended—others withdraw—dissension and confusion would abound, and the existence of the society be endangered. And suppose the individual members of the society to disregard the rules and orders to which they have subscribed; neglect the

* Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14.

† Isaiah ii. 2.

duties which they ought to perform ; and omit the uses they are required to discharge, what must in this case be expected, but a very serious failure as to the peace, harmony, prosperity, and happiness of the Church to which they belong ? When we enter into a religious society, we voluntarily lay ourselves under an obligation to be faithful, useful, and orderly members of it, and to abide by the decisions of the majority ; and this faithfulness, use, and order should be directed to three important objects,—the good and success of the Church, our own spiritual improvement, and the honour of our holy LORD, who is the head, the life, and the supreme ruler of the Church. Hence it will appear, that the situation and state of every member have very considerable use and responsibility attached to them ; and “ if we are not faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give us that which is our own.”* If we are careless and inattentive to the duties and uses we owe to the LORD’s Church, we shall be equally so as to those which respect our own spiritual states, and our progress in the regeneration. I am afraid that too many are apt to consider their connection with the Church as members, in too light a manner, not properly reflecting, that as such, we are parts of one whole, members of one body, and therefore that every part must be in its right place, every member in its own proper uses, otherwise the whole body will be in disorder, subject to decay, and its existence in danger. It seems as necessary for every member of the Church to keep his proper place, and discharge his proper duties therein, as it is for every branch of a large family to know their appropriate station ; the part they have to act, and the work which is peculiar to them. Nay, just so much as the Church of the LORD, with its duties and uses, is superior to the temporal concerns of a family, so much greater are the necessity and importance of those uses and duties which belong to every distinct member of it. To particularize those duties and uses is not my design here ; but to notice a few of those circumstances which prevent the discharge of them. There is, perhaps, in almost every one too much self-love, pride, love of dominion, and the like ; and too little pure charity, humility, and the love of serving. Hence little things are sometimes causes of great disorder, and unless we endeavour to suppress and keep down every improper love and disposition of our corrupt proprium, and cultivate the heavenly love and qualities of the spiritual man, mole-hills will

* Luke xvi. 12.

rise to mountains, and serious consequences follow. Perhaps the minister may, quite unintentionally, have hurt the pride of some one, by being free and faithful in generally reproving an error or an evil, and admonishing to relinquish it. Some member feels the reproof; chooses to deem it pointed; and takes offence! Instead of an humble application of the advice given, he acts like some of the LORD's disciples when He did not please them, who went away, and walked no more with Him! The speaker in his official capacity has done his duty, not knowing the member's state; but the member fails to do his duty; he goes away to nurse his folly, indulge his pride, and deprive himself of those means by which both might be eradicated, and himself be made happy. Another, it may be, is not quite pleased with the manner, or the matter, of the discourses: and this is made an excuse for less frequent attendance, if not for wholly withdrawing from the place to which he was accustomed. Nay, I have known a member withdraw himself and his support from a society, merely from a difference in opinion of some other members upon a subject of the most trifling and insignificant consequence. And how often has it been known, that a person has left the society, and all connection with it, because another member has in some instance offended him; although the person withdrawn was probably the most to blame. Did we truly consider the nature and constitution of the Church; the utility and advantage of being consistent members of it; the duties and uses we have to discharge in it: the great spiritual good we may promote as to ourselves and the whole society, with the high obligations we are under as members of one body, disciples of one LORD, and heirs of one kingdom, to fulfil our part in that body, act in all things as the disciples of the LORD, and honour his adorable name as the heirs of his eternal kingdom; did we, I say, truly consider these things, we should not suffer our selfhood, pride, love of dominion, or any mean or selfish propensity, to prevail and operate to the disadvantage of the Church; the discredit of the cause we profess to love; to our own spiritual injury; and to the dishonour of that holy LORD whose disciples we profess to be, and from whose unmerited bounty we enjoy the invaluable mercies of the New dispensation. If we are the real spiritual subjects of his New Church, we shall delight in being useful, discharge our several duties with faithfulness, enjoy the public means, ordinances, and services of the LORD's house with pleasure of soul, find

own eternal advantage therein, and rather make any sacrifice than deprive ourselves of those favours, by which our own eternal good, as well as that of the society, is promoted. The spiritual members of the New Church will bear in mind, that in a religious society where a considerable number of persons are brought together, there will always be a variety of characters, dispositions, and tempers; different states in the regenerate life; some more highly graduated in knowledge and intelligence, or of superior talents and understanding; others whose knowledge is more circumscribed, or whose talents are of an inferior order; some rather aspiring, prone to be active, and ready to put themselves forward; while others,—and they perhaps of superior attainments and talents,—are diffident, keep in the back ground, being too humble to render themselves conspicuous in the Church. Hence we perceive how important it is to exercise forbearance, and, in some cases, to make concessions, rather than be too tenacious of our own will and way; and where we are obliged to differ, to do it in the spirit of meekness and christian love, and in conformity with the requirements of courtesy and good manners; and in any instance where the opinion of the society preponderates over our own, to submit for the sake of peace, without manifesting displeasure, resentment, or warmth of temper. In short, it is the duty, and will be the care of every spiritual member, to make the peace, prosperity, and happiness of the Church to which he belongs, the first object of his attention, because he will thus most extensively and effectually contribute to the good, the spiritual benefit, and eternal well-being of his fellow-members. May then every member of a society of the New Church consider the high obligations he is under to fulfil the part he has undertaken, and the duties he has to discharge therein, for his own good, the prosperity of the society, and the honour of that LORD who has called him to the marriage supper of the Lamb, introduced him to the peculiar blessings of his Church here, and the inconceivable felicities of his kingdom in the heavens.*

* The reader may here consult the *Obligations and Duties of members of the New Church* drawn up and recommended by the General Conference since the original publication of this work, and generally adopted by societies.

SECTION X.

MEMBERS WHO ARE OPULENT; OR WHO OCCUPY SUPERIOR SITUATIONS IN LIFE.

THE following observation made by an apostle, has been found true in every age;—"You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh; not many mighty; not many noble, are called."* It is to be lamented that so few persons of this description are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." Wise men after the flesh are too frequently foolish men as to the spirit. Mighty men who are learned, great, and high in their own estimation, are too often ignorant, little, and low, in the estimation of angels. And they who are noble, but only so by birth, title, and worldly distinctions, are often mentally ignoble and mean, and as much below the poor, but real Christian, in his straw-covered cottage, as the latter is below an angel of heaven! A serious consideration it is, that worldly wisdom, power, and rank, should operate so strongly, and almost universally, against the wisdom of heaven, the power of divine truth, and the dignity of genuine goodness! We cannot, therefore, reasonably expect many such characters to become equally exalted as leading members of the New Church of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless there are in the Church those who are relatively wiser, higher, and richer than others. Such persons deserve respect and esteem suitable to their attainments or situations in life, and particularly when their spiritual state and uses in the Church correspond with the talents and means they possess. And it would not be unreasonable to suppose that such persons, being men of wealth and leisure, with talents and means superior to others, would be the most active and useful, diligent and exemplary members of a religious society. But the fact is that they are frequently found less so than the inferior classes. There are reasons why it is thus, which I will mention presently. I am now speaking only concerning those persons who, although opulent and in superior situations of life, have united themselves as members with a New Church society. And no doubt every recipient, whatever his rank or position, should do the same. Never yet has the LORD had a Church upon earth, but that Church was formed into societies and so became known

* 1 Cor. i. 26.

as a visible Church ; its members being thus united in fellowship, worship, ordinances, and in life ! What is the duty of one, is the duty of all, except unavoidable circumstances prevent. "Richer," or "poorer," "higher," or "lower," as to the things of this world, are quite out of the question. If we are Christians, and Christians of the New Church, we are all under equal obligations to promote that Church, internally and externally, and to unite in all things belonging thereto, according to the command, example, and order given in the holy Word of its Divine head and ruler. And I sincerely hope and believe the time will come, when every spiritual subject of the New Jerusalem will see it his indispensable duty to join in religious society with the members of that Church, and exert all his powers, talents, and abilities, to promote and increase it as a visible, orderly, and glorious Church in the world ! What have we to do with human regards, public opinions, or the esteem of the worldly wise ? We are subjects of another kingdom, servants to the King of kings and LORD of lords,—heirs to a glorious immortality. And while here, our great business is to be every thing, and do every thing in our power, to advance that kingdom among men, and in our own souls, that we may have the esteem of the Church, the good offices of associate angels, the approbation of our God, and be the better prepared for superior states of activity, use, and felicity in the New heavens. Whether we are wiser or less wise, richer or poorer, let us cast off all unreasonable diffidence, fear, and mere politic considerations, and be bold, courageous, and faithful in the best cause the world ever saw, for the best Master that ever employed a servant, and for the best reward an immortal being can receive at the hand of his God. What room is there for diffidence and fear, secrecy and reserve, in the eternal concerns of religion ? As a guard against all these, the words of Jesus Christ should sound in our ears, and powerfully awaken our consciences,—“Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”* But on the other hand, for our encouragement if we manfully discharge our duty, and commit our cause to his keeping, He tells us by his prophet, “Ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wonderfully with you, and my people shall never be ashamed, and ye

* Mark viii. 38.

shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else, and my people shall never be ashamed."*

I have said there are reasons why the opulent members in superior situations of life are not so active, useful, and diligent in the Church as might be expected. One reason is, that those in higher stations of life are prone to indulgences of inclination and self-will more than others; their wealth gives them such opportunities, and human nature is too ready to embrace them; former habits are confirmed by long use, and are not easily broken; connections in life; a continued acquaintance with men of the world; the enslaving influence of mere conventionalities and false politeness; all these operate as a check to a rigid adherence to conscience in regard to the external duties of religion. To be thought singular, "righteous over-much;" or under the rules and restraints of a religious society, hurts their pride, because it seems to place them in a state of subjection in which they are not willing to appear before the world; and it seems a state of subjection to men of the world because they know not that the order, the duties, and the services belonging to the Church are not so much of the Church, as they are of the LORD; and therefore are not to be neglected with impunity; not to be omitted without an eternal loss! Moreover, men of wealth in superior situations of life, have not been accustomed to question or controul from others; their property gives them a consequence, and their station an authority, which they are not disposed to relinquish; they have been used to dictate, rather than to receive dictation, or even counsel; and to command, rather than obey; the inclination to dictate and command, is a disposition of the natural man; and even in religious concerns, the natural man is disposed to exercise it. It is a considerable time before proprium is subdued, or that the rich and exalted can become poor in spirit, and humble enough to gird themselves with a towel, and, after the example of the LORD, wash the disciples' feet! How precious, when spiritually understood, are both the example and the precept, "If I, then, your LORD and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."†. But the LORD's great lesson—"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart," is not the first lesson learnt in the Christian school, but too

* Joel ii. 26, 27.

† John xiii.

frequently the last, if learnt at all! Another reason why rich persons are not so useful and exemplary in the Church is this,—although not a very good one,—that if a member is rich and moves in a higher sphere of life, he is deemed a wonderful acquisition to the Church. And why? Because he has more truth, more good, or is much more advanced in the regeneration? No; but because he has more money at command, and lives in a larger mansion than other members of the society. Hence there is an improper deference paid; because it is not so much paid to the man for any superior qualities or virtues, as to his temporal property, and merely adventitious circumstances. How needful is the advice of divine charity, in the person of James the Apostle:—"My brethren, have not the faith of our LORD Jesus Christ, the LORD of glory, with respect to persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in mean raiment, and ye have respect unto him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here, in a good place, and say to the poor man, stand thou here, or sit under my footstool; are ye not partial in yourselves, and judges of evil thoughts?"*

How frequently do Christians act in this obviously improper manner! The rich man is highly honoured; and the poor man but little esteemed. But let it not be supposed from this that I wish to say a word against that respect which is justly due to men in superior situations of life, or to men of learning and talents. I add another reason why such characters are neither so useful, diligent, or attentive to the rules and orders of a religious society as others. It is often the case that merely in consequence of their circumstances and situation, there is a fear of offending them. If they are negligent in their duties, no one will dare to admonish or reprove them. If they withhold that assistance, spiritual or temporal, which their circumstances and talents enable them to give, and the Church requires, who will venture to remind them of their obligations? or be faithful enough to tell them freely, but affectionately, of their fault? The Lord's example and precept, just referred to, are quite inoperative here. Whereas, with all freedom and plainness, the poorer member is called to account. There is no hesitation about spiritual feet-washing in the poor man's case. And thus the Church is deprived of the eminent uses and superior aids of a rich member, through fear of offending him. Adulation, or

* James ii. 1—4.

at least an improper and undue deference is paid to the man, because he has more temporal wealth than his neighbour! In too many instances, where a rich man is a resident member of the Church, the society is more to blame than the man himself; for were they faithful, did they pay no undue respect to persons, but acted towards all with impartial love, according to the strict rules of christianity and the example of Jesus Christ, such men would be kindly reminded of their duty, would see their obligations, and probably discharge them to the great advantage and success of the society to which they belong. Our blessed LORD has taught us both by precept and example how we are to act in this case. He said to his disciples, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant."* He also said, "Love one another," and that we may know how to do so, He refers to HIS OWN example by adding—"as I have loved you."† He accommodated not to the worldly state or situation of any class of men. His language to the Pharisee, scribe, lawyer, doctor, priest, high priest, or king, was plain and pointed, severe where requisite, plainly denouncing woes where woes were due. And although we have not the authority which belonged to the LORD, we have authority from Him to be faithful towards all. In our religious concerns, in what applies to the spiritual states and duties of our brethren and the prosperity of the Church, we must manifest no undue respect to persons, but be honest and faithful, as the servants of our Divine Master, and in all our conduct and dealings one with another, approve ourselves to Him, and "sanctify the LORD of Hosts Himself, and let Him be our fear, and let Him be our dread."‡ Then shall we act faithfully with all, but in humility, sincerity, and true affection demonstrating that the eternal good of each other, with the prosperity of the Church, are the grand objects we have in view, and in which all, whether high or low, rich or poor, wise or less wise, should be firmly and eternally united!

* Matt. xxiii. 11.

† John xv. 12.

‡ Isaiah viii. 13.

SECTION XI.

MARRIED MEMBERS OF THE NEW CHURCH.

To those who are united in the holy bonds of marriage, many very great and important duties belong; but to you, my brethren, as members of a Church the most holy and exalted of any that has existed since the most ancient times, those duties will appear in a stronger and more spiritual light, and consequently their importance be more clearly and distinctly seen. When it happens that one of the parties is a recipient of our heavenly doctrines, and the other is not, this, we must admit, is a disagreeable circumstance, and one that is often productive of serious unhappiness. Much prudence is therefore required as to the conduct of members of the Church so situated. Some useful hints to these persons may possibly be found in my observations to those partners who are both in the reception of the same heavenly doctrines. A union of minds, as to the essential principles, doctrines, and truths of the Lord's Word and kingdom, is certainly a most desirable state for married persons. Where one partner is truly religious, and the other has no religion at all, but is in direct opposition to it, that connection must be a miserable one indeed. It is like linking together a wolf and a lamb, or rather it is like an infernal spirit and an angelic being, dwelling together in one house. Such a religious person is to be sincerely pitied, and whether male or female, they will not fail of heaven for want of a purificatory cross by the way. If reason, remonstrance, and persuasion will have no effect upon the evil partner; resignation, patience, and forbearance, are virtues which the other party will have sufficient cause and opportunity to exercise! Where wedded partners differ in principle, doctrine, and sentiment, if both are truly sincere and religious according to that which they profess, they will not be so miserable as those just named; but their religious progress may be considerably impeded; their hearts cannot be so interiorly and firmly united; and more or less alloy to their peace and happiness will be the consequence. Should this be the case with any New Church Christians, and all their ardent and affectionate endeavours to bring their partners into the faith and love of the heavenly doctrines prove ineffectual, I would advise them to moderation and forbearance; to avoid

every degree of undue warmth; and to recollect that the other may be in the way to the kingdom, and equally under the leading of Divine Providence, according to their peculiar state, although not in the same path as themselves. A spiritual Christian of the New Church will feel for, and pity those who are in the errors of the Old. He will look at the good and the piety of his partner, rather than at the errors of opinion; and by the purity of his life, the amiableness of his manners, and the sweetness of his temper, unite the heart to his own, although the intellect, for a while, may refuse to be so united. In the present degenerate state of the christian world, such gross darkness prevails, that the One True God is not worshiped nor known; and the only source of all spiritual union, and also the true nature of that union not being understood, we must not expect to find many married pairs united in the purest and highest bonds of conjugal love. Reasons for this may be given which may not attach blame to the parties, but more upon this subject in another Section. Whether, therefore, our brethren be united with partners of different religious sentiments, or both are agreed in the doctrines and truths of the New Church, the following observations may not be unprofitable. In the former case they may have a tendency to ameliorate their condition, in some degree, and render their connection more comfortable through life.

All our married recipients who are spiritual Christians, and therefore under the illumination of eternal truth, will consider their wedded connection as a sacred one, not to be perverted or violated, but conscientiously maintained, and that inwardly as well as outwardly, in true affection and chastity, and with reciprocal endeavours to strengthen their union, and constitute it both profitable and happy. They will carefully avoid indulging any thoughts, conceptions, or ideas which tend to alienate their affections from each other instead of uniting them more closely. They will never indulge and cherish the idea, no, not for a single moment, that any other person with whom they have acquaintance, would be preferable to their present conjugal partner. All such thoughts must tend to alienate the affections of those who wickedly and madly indulge them, from their lawful partners. Be assured, then, my brethren, that to indulge in any such thoughts is the direct way to set aside and destroy all that comfort, pleasurable intercourse, pure affection, and true peace, which render the married state happy; and to intro-

duce dislike, disgust, confusion, and disorder, which will sooner or later change the silken band of wedlock into the galling iron chain of a miserable and hateful bondage! How plain, then, it is, that married pairs should most carefully avoid this dangerous gulf, which, like a dreadful whirlpool, draws into its vortex, and shatters to pieces every comfort and felicity of wedded life! Whoever indulges such thoughts cannot be a real spiritual member of the LORD's New Church. All such are merely external men, who profess the truth, join a society, but are still unrenewed in heart and life; they are just the same as they were before; or rather, worse, because having knowledge of the LORD's will, they do it not.

It is a peculiar advantage and felicity we enjoy under the New Jerusalem dispensation, to know, and to be fully assured, from the eternal truth of divine revelation, that "love is the essential life of man," and that pure heavenly love, derived from Jesus Christ, is the vital source of all our good affections, desires, and thoughts; but that an impure and infernal love is the source of all our evil affections, desires, and thoughts. And, as all the conduct of man proceeds from his ruling love, and is one with it, so his conduct wholly tends to his own misery and the misery of others; or to his own happiness and the happiness of others; and this results from the invariable law, that everything in the mind shall constantly tend to become agreeable to, and consistent with, the nature of that love which governs the heart. As, therefore, the ruling love of the spiritual Christian and true member of the LORD's Church is of a pure and heavenly nature, he will not only guard his natural affections from all unchaste desires or thoughts which tend to alienate his mind from the person to whom he is united; but he will also endeavour sedulously to cultivate and improve that connubial affection towards his partner, which is so essential to the peace and happiness of the marriage state; and if such endeavour be reciprocal, as it ought to be, and will be with truly sincere Christian minds, then the decision whether they are or are not conjugal partners who shall be united for ever, they will be content to leave to the disposal of that God to whom their hearts and lives are devoted, and to whom alone their interiors are known. In the mean time, they will continue cheerfully labouring to make their present state happy; and to promote in each other that preparation for eternity which is necessary to the enjoyment of the heavenly kingdom. For almost every-

thing connected with the peace and happiness of married life, depends upon a spirit of accommodation, forbearance, true politeness, and condescension to each other. Indeed true charity leads to, and requires such a spirit towards all men in our various concerns and connections with them, civil or religious, and how much more so between married pairs, whose connection is far more important, intimate, and constant! How very different is the spirit which too many who are deemed religious manifest towards their partners in life! These persons will frequently appear to be upright characters—zealous in religion—useful in the Church—orderly in their conduct before men, and as a consequence, are held in high estimation. But only reside in their house for a while, and then you will have an opportunity of reading their true character.

A proud, haughty, domineering spirit is the greatest bane of a family. The wife or the husband, in whichever this spirit rules, is either in a state of slavish subjection to the imperious will, a mere degraded servant; or, if resentment and opposition take place, wrath, passion, and violence, are the consequence, and the fire of the infernal regions consumes every enjoyment; destroys all comfort and peace; and turns religion out of doors. How miserable must the children and servants be who reside where such a spirit rules! And let me ask, are such proud, lordly, domineering characters happy in themselves? Certainly not. They carry in their breast their own misery; and nourish that "fire of hell"* which burns up all their peace, and consumes their religion to dust and ashes! Let every married member of the New Church guard against this most unhappy disposition of the fallen proprium. It is nothing less than that same love of dominion, exercised in a small circle, which, if opportunity were given, would equally domineer over a community, a kingdom, and the world. It is a spirit directly opposed to religion, to heaven, and consequently to the God of heaven, and tends to nothing less than misery here, and the most abject slavery, the most degraded bondage, in the dark regions of endless woe!

It is a truth which will be acknowledged by all, that there is no state in this world designed to constitute man so happy as that of the true marriage state, and were mankind in conformity with divine order, it certainly would be so. Disordered as they are, it might be much more happy than it frequently is, and if

* James iii. 6.

unhappy married people could see themselves as God sees them, they would say, "we are ourselves the cause of all this unhappiness." In our own house we deem ourselves entitled to authority, and naturally feel at liberty to indulge those dispositions to command, which we cannot indulge elsewhere. And this shews what human nature is; and how it would act if it were not under strong restraints, for if it were not, these intolerant dispositions would be manifested without check, to the confusion and misery of all around. These selfish tempers and passions we can restrain in society and before the world, for certain reasons of interest, temporal advantage, and self-regard. But at home, with our domestics and dependants, we are not under restraint, and our propensity to indulge our self-will is too often so strong, as to supersede our own peace, as well as the happiness of the family. We should recollect that anger, wrath, and the like passions, have their origin in hell; they are no less than the fire and smoke of those regions breaking out into a flame, that like a conflagration, may consume everything valuable belonging to us. How sad to behold an amiable and pious wife, or a virtuous and affectionate husband, dear children, and faithful servants, rendered uncomfortable and unhappy, through anger and violent passion,—a species of madness which, while the paroxysm lasts, there is no computing to what extremes it may go! These are the dispositions which, in their very beginnings, we should most particularly guard against as married persons; and in our own house, because this is the only place where we are in danger of being tempted to indulge in them. Here it is that, in a peculiar manner, we are to exercise self-denial; and to subdue those evils which are really within us, although, for politic reasons, they may not manifest themselves elsewhere. The grounds and reasons for this self-denial are many and important,—not only that we may preserve our own peace and comfort, with those of our partner and domestics, but also that our own regeneration may not be impeded. It is a most dangerous state when religious professors conclude they are true christians, disciples of Jesus Christ, and in the way to his kingdom, merely because their outward life and conduct stands fair, and they are considered as religious and spiritual characters. But is this a sufficient proof? By no means. The question is, what am I in private? What am I at home, in my own house? In what light do I appear to my wife, my husband, my children, or my servants? Do I manifest the faith and the love,—the

righteousness and the purity,—the meekness and humility of the truly spiritual christian *THERE*?—Do I there subdue my concupiscences and bad dispositions, take up my cross, deny myself of every evil that would hurt myself and disturb the peace of those that belong to me,—endeavouring to make them all happy, and delighting to see them so?—Or can I as a christian, upon every trifling occasion when something does not altogether please me, or on no occasion at all, fly into a passion, domineer, be angry and wrathful, and by word or deed, grieve, distress, and render truly miserable, my partner and my family?—Or at other times, can I be morose, sullen, and unsociable; while, perhaps, an indulgent wife (or a worthy husband) knows not the cause; has given no offence; but can only silently mourn and lament the evil dispositions and tempers of one who is universally deemed a spiritual christian elsewhere; but at home is the very reverse, the bane of all peace, the torment of the family, and the dread of all within the reach of his influence and power! If those in wedded life wish to promote their own peace, the happiness of their partners, the comfort of their domestics, and make their habitation a house of God, let them watchfully and prayerfully subdue every temper, passion, and disposition which they know to be contrary to true felicity, because contrary to genuine christianity. Let them seriously reflect, that so long as they indulge in any of them, and suffer them to come forth, they are not only making a wife, a husband, children, or servants unhappy, and themselves also; but at the same time they are preventing their own regeneration, stopping their progress in the heavenly life, and keeping up an association with infernal spirits; so that, with all their religious profession and outward appearance, they are in great danger of a final separation from God, and from the company of angels! The principles, doctrine, and truths we profess are of a divine, spiritual, and internal nature. They teach us that the inside of the cup and platter must be cleansed as well as the outside; and consequently that the impure affections, lusts, and bad dispositions of our corrupt selfhood, which we may conceal from the world, but which we can indulge at home, must be subdued and cast out. Nothing can be more anomalous than that christians who are careful to appear virtuous among their brethren, useful in the church, and orderly in the society to which they belong, as to worship, duties, and external life, should, at the same time, play the petty tyrant at home, make their partners and family

unhappy by their love of dominion, anger, wrath, sullenness, or any of those vile qualities and dispositions which they know have their origin and source in the infernal world. What is the religion of such persons? A mere shadow without substance! an image without life! Let every one, then, strive to be in reality what he wishes to appear,—to be in every department of life, and in every state, what the doctrines inculcate, as being essential to his regeneration, and his final felicity in the New Heavens. Again I would say emphatically, that married christians who are truly such, will labour to promote a true union of minds, their conduct to each other will be affectionate, mild, and attractive; little things will not be magnified, but excused; everything will be done to increase love, ensure peace, and render the married state happy. They will not forget the exhortation of the apostle, so pre-eminently applicable to married partners;—"Be kindly affectioned one to another." "Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord."—Every disposition and temper that has the least tendency to render either party uncomfortable even for an hour, will in this case be hated as an enemy to domestic felicity, and banished the house. It cannot remain where true religion resides, and not only resides, but rules. In every situation of life, such pairs, whether conjugal partners for eternity or not, will do honour to the marriage state, advance and ensure their own comfort and happiness, assist each other in the way to the heavenly kingdom, and be preparing for a high and holy conjugal union in the perfection of felicity, delight, and love, increasing and abounding in the New heavens of their God, for ever and ever!

SECTION XII.

THE CONJUGIAL OR MARRIED STATE.

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[THIS Section in the original work, consisted of an extract from a publication not written by Mr. Proud, called *The Angelic Messenger*. It is omitted here, it being preferred to the insertion of it, to recommend to the reader's attention, Swedenborg's inestimable work ON CONJUGIAL LOVE, which may be obtained of the publisher. The reader is also referred for many edifying collateral remarks to the XVth Section of this work.]

SECTION XIII.

TO PARENTS ON THEIR PARENTAL DUTIES.

WE cannot be truly spiritual and useful members of the LORD'S New Church, unless we attend to the particular duties of our station. Permit me, then, to remind you of your parental duties; and affectionately to call upon you to discharge them. In the first place, you will please to remember, that your example will have a powerful and lasting effect upon your children. And when I say example, I mean—not merely as to your moral conduct, but—as to your religious conduct also. It is well known that children are very observant. Words and deeds impress their little minds, and are fixed on the memory, and any thing that is evil or out of order is, perhaps, in consequence of our nature being fallen, much sooner appropriated, and longer retained, than what is good and orderly. Hence excitement, warmth, anger, and passion between the parents, or with the offspring, should ever be avoided. For how shall we check and subdue those bad qualities in our children, if we indulge them in ourselves? With what propriety can parents teach their children to avoid wrath, passion, and anger, and reprove them for such qualities, if, at the same time, the children are frequent witnesses of the same evils in their parents? Or how can you instil into their susceptible minds the amiableness of meekness, forbearance, and mutual affection, while between yourselves those virtues seldom or never appear? As in these cases, so in all others, if we would train up our children to virtue and religion, we must carefully and uniformly set them an example. That is the first thing; and the next is, to exact from them in a wise, firm, and consistent manner, a uniform and constant obedience to our commands. Their wills must be habitually subject to our will; or we cannot expect when they become men and women, that they will submit their wills to the revealed will of God. We must never let them conquer us; if prudence requires that the contest be deferred, they must not be allowed to think that we have yielded. In vain do we talk of loving our offspring, if we do not manifest our love to their souls by “training them up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD.” How many parents there are who idolize their children; can hardly bear them out of their sight, and to think

of their dying!—this would almost turn their brain! But notwithstanding all this ardour of affection, this uncommon love, the souls of their dear children are entirely neglected!—Nay, such is the nature of their love, that it has a direct tendency to ruin their souls.—“For the dear children must be indulged; they must not be contradicted; they must have their own way. Dear creatures, they mean no harm; every thing in them is so amiable. Let them alone; they are but children; by-and-by they will judge and do better.” But what sort of members of society is such culture likely to make them? Certainly not christians of superior character! If, then, you regard your children’s real welfare; if you wish to see them moral, virtuous, worthy characters; if you desire they should be religious and pious heirs with you of a glorious immortality; guard against this immoderate, this destructive, this blind and merely animal love! You cannot more effectually prevent the respectability and true happiness of your children than by such conduct. Remember that, as parents, you are to act under the authority and direction of your Divine Master and LORD. You are to love your child after the pattern of his love to his creatures. Do not prefer to love your children after the pattern of the love of the tiger and hyena to their cubs; but love them spiritually and unselfishly, as God loves them. Put the eternal interests of their souls above the transient interests of their bodies, as He does. He puts your offspring under your care; and He expects that from a regard to his will, and from a spiritual affection to your children, you shall not only set them a good example, but also rule and govern them; keep them in subjection to your just authority; and accustom them to treat you with becoming deference and respect, or you will never be regarded by them with true filial affection. Take care, therefore, to check the irregular sallies of their young and erring minds. Subdue their improper tempers and dispositions. Correct them when wrong,—not as tyrants, but as tender parents; not from the irregular impulses of fitful humour; but the firm and consistent dictates of wisdom. Instruct and teach them every moral, virtuous, and religious lesson necessary to form their minds to what is good, and to regulate their future conduct in life. Your charge, your office, and your duty towards your children are of the utmost importance, involving almost infinite consequences.*

* Parents will find the little work called *The Young Christian’s Earliest*

Parents should take great care that the companions of their children are such as will not be likely to injure their morals, or corrupt their minds. What spiritual Christians of the New Church will suffer their beloved offspring to associate with the untaught, the immoral, and wicked children of irreligious and wicked parents? What can more contaminate their impressible minds than such association? It is the direct way to insemminate bad words, bad qualities, give them a habit of liking low company, and lead them in the path of ruin! If you had a little tender lamb that you were very fond of, would you turn it loose into a field of foxes and tigers? And why not? Because it would be destroyed. Then suffer not your dearer lambs to be destroyed by the bears and tigers of the infernal regions!

Such of you as have it in your power will, I hope, see the importance of a good education for your children. This, I admit, must be regulated according to the situation and temporal circumstances of the parents. Those who are in affluent circumstances, are able to give to their children a superior education, suitable to their future prospects and connections in life. But those parents who are in business, trade, and various occupations, and also mechanics and others, may not be sufficiently sensible of the value of a proper education. Unquestionably it is the duty of all parents to give their children such an education as their circumstances will admit and their situation in life requires. It would hardly be expected that a religious parent who is a journeyman mechanic, should send his child to a boarding school; but he may have it in his power to send him to a day school, where he may learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, sufficient for all purposes in his future life; and now there are so many free and sunday schools, a parent would be highly culpable if he did not take care that his children are instructed; for the many great advantages of a suitable education every thoughtful parent must perceive. Nevertheless, I conceive there are two considerable errors into which religious parents are liable to fall. The one is that of neither sending them to school, nor teaching them at home, narrowness of circumstances being pleaded as an excuse. This is not right. Members of the New Church should seriously consider the loss their children sustain; the disadvantages they will labour under in future

Friend very useful to their younger children; and the *Manual of Piety for the Young*, of equal use to their elder children. They, and also *Essays on Domestic Education*, may be obtained from the Publisher through any bookseller.

life in competing with the better instructed now that education is all but universal; and how much better, in a civil, moral, and religious point of view, would be their position by having a suitable education. How are such children sufficiently to understand their moral duties, and also their religious obligations, if they can neither read nor write? And how are they to acquaint themselves with, and be properly instructed in, the great subjects, the heavenly doctrines, principles and truths of the New dispensation; all of which are so important and useful to the formation of the christian character?—My brethren, whatever may be your state and situation, never neglect or omit to give your children all the instruction and education you have it in your power to give. Remember it is one important duty required of you by that LORD who has given you offspring, and placed them under your care for their good. Your intelligent performance of this duty may contribute to their regeneration and final happiness in heaven!

But there is another fault, to which some of our brethren are exposed, and which I conceive is calculated to produce very ill effects. Parents of the New Church should be particularly careful in the education of their children, that on the one hand they neglect not to give them proper and suitable instruction; and on the other, that they do not give them such instruction as is unsuitable to their station, and will be injurious to them, or at least useless, in the future part of life. What shall we say of a parent who is a mechanic or small tradesman, or one whose income is very moderate, and whose future prospects as to himself and his children are not superior to his own present situation, if with no reasonable expectation of their moving in a higher sphere than himself, and his circumstances are such that he cannot with propriety and prudence give them any more than a common and useful education, he should give them an expensive education in accomplishments? Is it expedient or necessary to send his children to a high and expensive boarding school, there to be taught those expensive arts which serve to amuse the wealthy in superior stations of life, and enable them to "kill time?"

There is another circumstance I would impress upon the minds of parents. It is a truth which will not be denied, that every institution and ordinance appointed by the LORD, as our supreme governor, ought to be seriously and religiously attended to. Consequently, the LORD's day, and the religious duties of

that day, are of high and holy importance, and of essential use in the Christian life. And it is most reasonable to suppose that the real members of the New Church would set the best and most orderly example as to this day and its duties. Is it not, then, one great duty incumbent upon parents, to teach their children by example, precept, and authority, to venerate the LORD's day, and keep it holy? The day itself and the duties of it, are as essential to the true Christian character and life as the observance of almost any other law in the holy Word. This observation may, perhaps, be deemed over-strict, or even puritanical. But is it consistent with divine order? Does it ask for more than obedience to divine laws, a conscientious regard to the word and will of that infinitely wise and good LORD whose every injunction is of infinite importance to man? Can any thing be more consistent, or more reasonably be expected of real members of our Church, than that they should take care their children be in due time prepared for the duties of the LORD's day; that they should hear them read the Word, and explain it so far as they are able; and, remembering the promise they gave at their children's baptism to attend to their religious instruction, should hear them repeat their catechism, and see that they understand it. Other profitable and pleasant reading, intermingled with conversation, may be resorted to in order to render the LORD's day a day of real pleasure to the little ones, and remove every feeling of dulness. The LORD's day will ever be welcome to children when it is thus happily devoted to their religious instruction. They must be accustomed regularly to attend public worship with their parents; be kept from all merely worldly occupations and employments; from rambling about the streets or roads at their own pleasure; and from idle and vain amusements. Surely reason as well as Scripture require from parents the exercise of this wholesome and judicious controul! How then can religious parents be justified if they do not direct and govern their children in this manner? What should we think of parents who suffer their children to be idling about in an undress until noon; letting them read, or not read, as they think fit; omit their catechism whenever they choose; go to Church or not go, at their own choice; rambling about here and there, at their pleasure; and spending the LORD's holy day in a disorderly, and unholy manner?—Should we call such parents Christians—spiritual Christians of the New Church? Surely those who are acquainted with internal things,

must see the importance of order, regularity, and strict attention to the divine laws of Jesus Christ, above all other professors, and therefore must devoutly regard and attend to the institutions and ordinances of the holy Word! And not only their knowledge, their principles, and their doctrines, but also their pure spiritual love for their offspring, should impel them to keep their children from such injurious improprieties, and cause them to oblige them to observe the order, the duties, and the worship of that sacred day,—a day which the LORD has appointed for the most beneficent purposes,—that by the faithful observance of them they and their children may be edified, instructed, and trained up for an eternal sabbath of rest and happiness in heaven!

But I must here remark that the only way to insure the pious observance of the LORD's day by their children when they are grown up, is for the parents to train them to habits of piety, not only on the LORD's day, but every day. They should very early be taught to repeat the LORD's Prayer. When children perceive that their parents worship God daily*, as well as require them to "say their prayers," a habit of piety will be likely to grow up with them which they will never forget. There is great truth in the saying, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old [or rather when he is older] he will not depart from it." And ABOVE ALL THINGS I would say, train up your children with A MOST STRICT AND RELIGIOUS REVERENCE for truth, and a hatred of every form of duplicity, artfulness, and deception. It is not difficult to inspire children at a very early age, with a most delicate sense of honour. Be advised, my brethren, to re-examine your conduct. Notice what has been wrong; and for your own sake, for the sake of your beloved children, and to the honour of that LORD you profess to serve, consider your duties and obligations as parents, and faithfully discharge them. Recollect, also, what advantages will arise to your offspring. You will preserve them from numberless evils; lead them in the right way to be respectable and useful members of society, sincere Christians, and probably be the happy instruments of their being the blessed subjects of the LORD's approbation for ever! At the same time you will discharge your duty, honour the cause you profess, and enjoy an ample reward in your own conscience.

* The publisher would here recommend the Rev. W. Mason's *Help to Devotion*, for the use of parents.

SECTION XIV.

TO MASTERS AND MISTRESSES IN THE NEW CHURCH.

THERE are two passages in the divine Word which, if seriously considered together, would have a happy effect upon our conduct: the first passage is this,—“Behold ALL souls are mine*.”† the other is,—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”† If, then, all souls are the LORD’s, they were created by Him, they were redeemed by Him, they are the objects of his mercy, and designed to be the happy subjects of his kingdom for ever. All the rest of my Heavenly Father’s family have souls as valuable as mine. They partake of his favour, and are as much designed for eternal blessedness as myself. Here, then, we see the force and importance of loving them as we love ourselves. But this love is not to be an inactive principle in our breasts; it must be operative, and manifest. We are to shew the actual existence of the principle in us by its effects in our conduct and life. We all know that true charity and its good constitute the essence and life of faith and religion. It will be well, therefore, occasionally to consider, whether there may not be some deficiency in the exercise of this divine principle of love, in regard to our dependants, and whether, in some cases, we do not overlook, or do not properly attend to, this great and important duty. Divine Providence has placed some persons in situations and circumstances by which they are enabled to engage servants, to be employed in certain work, labour, and business connected with their particular situations. Now these servants have souls. These souls are the LORD’s. They are like our own, and of equal value. They must be eternally miserable, or eternally happy. While they are our servants, they are under our protection and care, a part of our family; our duty to them is very important, and we are bound to make ourselves acquainted with it, in order that we may perform it. I shall not attempt to detail the particular duties we owe them, nor the importance justly to be attached to the discharge of those duties, but confine myself to one circumstance only; because, if that be faithfully attended to, every other duty relative to them will probably be observed. I mean the exercise of love or charity towards our servants on the sabbath, or LORD’s Day. I know it is too

* Ezekiel xviii. 4.

† Matt. xxii. 39.

common for religious professors to employ their servants throughout the whole of the sacred day, in domestic and manual labour, as much so, and frequently more so, than on the other days of the week. But in what kind of labour? Is it only in works of real necessity? No, it is in works unnecessary to be done; and sometimes improper to be done; and if they are works which constitute the breach of a divine law, they are not only unnecessary and improper, but they are evil works.—What then are these works? They are such as cleaning the house and furniture; an extraordinary cooking and dressing of food, and waiting on company; and thus toiling all the day through, to gratify the sensual appetite, or, at best, the natural social feelings of their superiors. Other servants are employed to get ready the horse or gig, and to attend their governors in a ride of pleasure, or to to busy themselves in other ways in which servants are commonly engaged. But they have no time allowed for reading, relaxation, or for meditation, if so disposed. And as to a place of worship—how many masters and mistresses who call themselves christians, never think of their servants going to Church or Chapel! Are these souls thine, benevolent Father of our race! Are they the objects of thy care and love, designed for thy kingdom and to be happy there!—Yes, thou art no respecter of persons; the poor and rich, master and servant, are all alike to thee.—“All souls are thine!” Can there be any sincere professors of thy Word who know thy will and venerate thy laws, who can treat their servants in this manner! If there are such,—let not one true subject of the LORD's New Church be found thus treating their servants!” Our servants are a part of our family, and we are accountable to our God and their God, for the manner in which we conduct ourselves towards them. They are our servants, to serve us, in what is lawful and right; and we, as the LORD's servants, are to serve Him, and one essential part of our service to God, is to do our duty towards those who serve us. While they serve us in temporal, bodily, and worldly things; we are to serve them, do them good, and assist them, according to our power, in spiritual and eternal things. The LORD's Day should be their day of rest—their holy day,—as much so as it is ours, except in matters of real necessity. Let us hearken to the divine law of the Sabbath, to the extent that it is perpetuated by the LORD in the New Testament, and the practice of the primitive church as handed down to us. Be it impressed upon our minds, that

this is an indispensable and eternal divine law. If we violate this law, we sin against God, as surely as if we are unjust, covet what is another's, or take the name of the LORD in vain. We sin ourselves; our example leads others to sin; we sin in our servants, and cause them to sin. We keep them in ignorance; oblige them to neglect their duty to God, and make them our slaves when they should be allowed to serve the Most High. But did we look forward to the end, we should act differently; we should then recollect that we have the charge of their souls; are bound by true charity to do all we can, not only to render their situation as servants comfortable and easy, but also that it is our duty to set them the best example; to instruct them to the extent of our power; give them the spiritual blessings of the LORD's Day, and do all we can to promote their everlasting happiness as fellow-creatures,—as souls that are the LORD's, that so we may be instruments in his hand to bring our servants to that kingdom which we hope to enter ourselves. Too many servants, instead of finding a place in that happy kingdom, will have to accuse their masters and mistresses before the angels of God, of being the causes or instruments of their ignorance, evil, and disorder in this world, and their unhappiness in the world to come. We complain of bad servants; and there is too much cause for such complaint. But that cause often lies in a great degree with masters and mistresses. Were these good, orderly, and fulfilled their part towards their domestics, servants would become better, and the cause of complaint decrease, if not totally disappear. And may every one of us possess the heart and the tender feelings,—the genuine charity of the good centurion, who said, "LORD, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented, pray come and heal him, for my servant is DEAR UNTO ME!"*—And may the souls of our servants be dear unto us! "Behold all souls are mine," saith the LORD. "And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Be this love a living principle in our internal man, operating in our external conduct in all things, then we shall consider the souls of our servants dear and valuable as our own. We shall ameliorate their situation and servitude as much as in our power. The holy day of the LORD shall be a holy day and a day of rest to them. They will the better serve us, and we shall the better do our duty to the LORD, in doing to our servants what is right, and just, and good, consistent

* See Matt. viii. 6; Luke vii. 2.

with reason, true charity, and the equitable laws of divine revelation. My brethren, we are members of a Church founded in divine order, love, and righteousness. We are not to follow, or be influenced by the defective conduct of other professing Christians, nor are we through the custom of others, the fear of being singular, or through the love of sensual indulgences or company-keeping, to act towards the lowest and meanest of our fellow-creatures from any other principle than that of genuine charity, the loving others as we love ourselves. From this divine principle, we are to act in all states, situations, and relations of life; and if we do so, our servants will have no just cause of complaint. Then shall we do to our servants in all cases as we should wish them to do unto us, were we in their situation, and they in ours. **THIS**, let us ever remember, is the unalterable and eternal law of that holy God, whose servants and disciples we profess to be. Let us remember this, and then we shall never put our own natural and selfish indulgence before their eternal interests.

The subject of this section may not please some persons,—but who are they? Not the truly spiritual and sincere members of the **LORD'S** most holy church. These, in their conduct, will agree with my views, and therefore cannot be otherwise than pleased with what is agreeable to them; and **THESE**, also, if they have erred as to the present subject, will be thankful for the admonition, correct what is amiss, and avoid it in future. They will be benefited, and my end answered. These worthy persons, then, will be pleased; but to please opposite characters by suppressing the truth, no right mind would require of me.—And here I may add, that it must not be supposed that, in speaking of the conduct I have condemned, that I include the occasional entertainment of friends on the **LORD'S** day, who, from various causes, cannot be assembled on other days. These are just exceptions, and in the view of any wise and liberal judgment, would be so considered, for such entertainments are, in some sense, works of necessity. I have condemned those who make it a rule to spend the **LORD'S** day in the manner I have described; not those who make it a reluctant exception. No reasonable servant will complain if that is the only thing they have to complain of.

SECTION XV.

TO YOUNG PERSONS OF THE NEW CHURCH, MALE AND FEMALE,
WHO ARE UNMARRIED.

I AM now to address those young persons who are recipients of our heavenly doctrines, who are seriously and religiously disposed, and who are respected in the societies for their amiable and orderly conduct. It is more than probable, my young friends, that you have not as yet fully considered and duly appreciated the extraordinary spiritual blessings with which you are favoured. Indeed we cannot sufficiently value them. They are inestimable! Through the infinite mercy of our adorable LORD at this his second appearing, the false doctrines, human inventions, and destructive errors,—constituting that dense cloud of darkness which has so long surrounded the Christian hemisphere, and veiled the eternal Word of divine Revelation from the intellectual eye of man,—are now removed and chased away by the bright life-giving rays of heaven's eternal Sun. You may well rejoice that in your early days, you are delivered from the surrounding systems of falsehood and error, and that your youthful feet are set in the straight and clear-shining path of infallible and everlasting truth. To you, my young friends, the blessed Word of Jesus Christ is opened in its interior spiritual sense, by means of the divine science of correspondences now revealed, that science of all the sciences ever known to man! The one true and only God, Jehovah in his Divine Humanity, you know, and I trust will ever adore and love. The essential principles of true Christianity and of heaven,—the pure faith,—the infallible doctrines, and the all-illuminating truths of the LORD's Word and Kingdom are now made plain to your understanding and recommend themselves to your hearts by their beauty, their purity, and their exalted use, in short, pure heaven-descended religion, as to its Author, its principle, its life, and its end, is presented to your astonished view in its own celestial robes, its divine charms, its captivating form, and its everlasting beatitudes and glories! So rich, so great, and infinitely beyond what my pen can describe, are the favours and mercies sent to you from heaven by the LORD your Redeemer! But notwithstanding this bountifulness of Divine goodness, this wonderful display of Infinite wisdom and love,

confirmed and demonstrated in the most rational, scriptural, and convincing manner, the world at large blindly rejects the divine gift, and my young friends, as its recipients, will meet, and have to contend with, much opposition. Your relatives, companions, or those with whom you are connected in life, will do their best to dissuade you from your religious pursuits, representing the Christian system you delight in as the production of an enthusiastic or insane mind. They will probably bring forward objections plausible enough to stagger your faith, in the hope of inducing you to relinquish those doctrines and truths to which they are really strangers, and which the clouds of error and falsehood that envelope their understandings, have concealed from their view! While, therefore, you pity them for their darkness and opposition to divine truth, you will do well to guard against the snares they may lay to deprive you of your superior light. Those who have studied the tripersonal doctrines and sentiments, and are fully confirmed in them, are often very shrewd in defence of them; they have collected together strong arguments, and reason artfully from the natural man, and are very adroit in perverting scripture to vindicate their own favourite systems; and it often happens that young persons who affectionately receive the doctrines of the New dispensation, are not only zealous in maintaining them, but also too ready to enter into controversy and dispute even with the veterans of error; but instead of doing them any good, their own faith is sometimes shaken, and their minds much confused through the subtle reasoning of these old professors, and their dexterous application of the holy Word to confirm their fond opinions. I lately knew a very judicious and sensible young gentleman, a recipient of our doctrines, who by this method had his faith so shaken by two Calvinistic professors, that he was nearly determined to relinquish the doctrines, and his mind was actually so hurt, that he was in a kind of spiritual derangement, and that to a high degree of suffering for several weeks,—for under such circumstances, those of the tenderest consciences will be sure to be the greater sufferers;—but he happily made his case known to an experienced friend of the Church, by whose assistance he was set at liberty from his doubts and his sufferings, and returned to his former confirmed and happy state of mind. I would therefore advise my young friends to be cautious of entering into controversy or dispute with the above characters. But should they do so, and become puzzled

by them, let them not fail, as soon as possible, to consult some friend or well known advocate of the doctrines, and depend upon it they will obtain satisfactory answers. A word or two in friendly conversation may, on some occasions, be useful; but still they had better avoid warm dispute, which, indeed, seldom does any good in any case. If opposed by persons of the above-named description, recommend to them, or put into their hands, some judicious work written in defence or explanation of the doctrines, before which these sturdy old oaks will find themselves dwindle into broken reeds! The Divine Truth has always been too powerful for error. It may be opposed, it may be reviled, but it cannot be conquered. This is the reason why our opponents have always been silenced. They may be men of superior science, learning, and talents, but we have the omnipotent sword of divine truth in our hands, and the immense armies of error and false doctrines must fall before it, as the millions of Canaan fell before the sword of the LORD in the hand of Joshua his servant!

And let me earnestly recommend you, my young friends, whether male or female, in order that your minds may be strengthened and confirmed in divine truth, to read frequently, and meditate seriously upon those luminous pages which are presented to you in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. We cannot too earnestly recommend to your most serious attention those heaven-taught writings. You already know by some experience, that they ever lead us to the holy Word; inspire us with a pure and increasing love to it; and open to us the inexhaustible treasures, the precious pearls, the astonishing wonders of goodness and mercy, love and wisdom, contained in the Divine Book of God. But on this subject I really want words adequate to express the value of these extraordinary writings. I want words to express my own feelings of their value; or to explain sufficiently the spiritual and eternal advantages we may derive from them. My young friends, as you wish to know the things that belong to your peace, to be comfortable and blessed through this life, and to be everlastingly happy in the heavens of Jesus Christ your God, let me entreat you to read and study at all opportunities these valuable and instructive writings. Do not content yourselves merely with hearing once or twice on Sundays a discourse from your minister, but read and meditate for yourselves. Every page will enlighten your understandings and elevate your hearts. They will open to

you the holy Word in its doctrines, truths, and divine subjects, literal and spiritual. Whatever relates to faith and life, christianity and heaven, is there exhibited in the bright and glorious light of a new and everlasting day. We cannot be too earnest in recommending, nor can you be too diligent in reading, those inestimable writings, whose truths, through the instrumentality of one of the worthiest and wisest of men, the God of all mercies has given for the enlightenment of a spiritually benighted age. If you read in pure affection, improve the truths you learn, by living in conformity with them, your own experience will soon convince you, that what I have said does not exaggerate their value, excellence, and importance.

Since I am addressing you as young men and women who belong to the New Jerusalem Church, I hope there will be little need for me to caution you to avoid irreligious and unprofitable company. You cannot really receive the truth and good of the LORD's Word and kingdom without detesting the evil and the false which are opposite thereto. Hence, if you are sincere, you cannot enter into close connection or friendship with any immoral character, under any pretence whatever. Your concerns in life, your business and intercourse with society, may at times unavoidably lead you into the company of such persons; be careful, then, that you guard against the evil habits, follies, vain indulgences, and improprieties in conduct, of the example of which young persons are too susceptible. It is a sad truth, that good minds are more easily contaminated by evil ones, than evil minds are benefited by good ones. There are two reasons for this. One is, that immoral and evil minds are governed by impure loves and concupiscences, are strangers to virtue, and therefore not susceptible of good impressions. The other reason is, that even virtuous and serious young people, just setting out in the life of religion, must needs have much of the impure loves of the fallen proprium not yet subdued; and therefore may be more easily contaminated by a congenial spark of the like impure fire from an evil mind. I do not here mean to suggest that religious young persons should have no natural enjoyments, amusements, or gratifications. These may be necessary to recreate the mind after business, and to preserve that vigour and cheerfulness which are required for daily duties. True religion does not tend to make people gloomy and sad, reserved and unsocial; nor does it call upon you to deny yourselves every natural pleasure and recreation: but when you consider the

very evil and depraved state of human nature,—ever prone to prefer pleasure to duty; the propensity of our corrupt minds to improper indulgences; and the importance of shunning evils as sins against God, you will readily perceive how necessary it is for young persons to be careful that they do not suffer their natural minds to gain any ascendancy over their spiritual principles; or to tarnish those heavenly garments they have put on; for let them be assured that the little time they have in this world, with all their diligence, will be but barely sufficient to keep their wedding garment pure, and to prepare and perfect it for the divine marriage in the kingdom of heaven! It is the duty of New Church Christians to discriminate accurately between those indulgences and pleasures of a natural kind which are rational, and consistent with the divine Word, and those which are not. This subject, however, I shall more particularly notice in another Section. In the mean time, let me entreat my serious and truly religious young friends to consider that they profess to belong to, and have received the doctrines and truths of a Church which is to be the most orderly, pure, and heavenly of any that has existed since the most ancient days,—a Church in which not only the principles and faith, but the conduct and life of its subjects are set before us in such a clear and spiritual light, that we can evidently see what we have to shun, and what we have to do, whether aged or young, male or female, and in whatever state and situation Providence may place us! We have not only those encouragements and motives set before us which others have not; but we have also every thing to deter us from the paths of evil and folly. We have peculiarly open to us the sources of the purest enjoyment, rational, moral, and spiritual. We have every thing to animate us in the christian course, while passing through this wilderness of an evil world. We have the blessed certainty and glorious prospect, that when we lay down our material incumbrances of flesh and blood, we shall immediately appear as men and women, substantial beings in a human form, with all our powers, faculties, and senses complete, in a world of spirits, and be conducted by the tender assiduities of ministering angels to the New heavens of our adored and beloved LORD; to behold his glory; enjoy his favour; and partake the perfect felicity of his love and kingdom to all eternity! When we thankfully consider these great and exhilarating subjects, we shall perceive that we have motives beyond all others, to shun even every

appearance of evil, and to walk diligently in the paths of divine order and righteousness. We are not only under superior obligations of duty, but from an interior spiritual delight we can, and ought to carry out our labour of love, so as to be the most exemplary Christians in the world.

While then, my young friends, you see it both your duty and your interest not to walk "in the counsels of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, but to delight in the law of the LORD*," you will equally see it your duty, your privilege, and your present and eternal interest, to walk in the counsel of spiritual men, and stand in the way of righteous characters, who are the genuine subjects of the LORD's true and living Church. In this case you will avail yourselves of every opportunity for religious conversation. Those who really delight in any subject, are ever found to seek the society of those best able to converse upon it. Social meetings for spiritual improvement; and the worship of the Church, and all the duties of the LORD's day, will also receive your best attention. I am well aware that not only young professors of our doctrines, but also too many elder ones, are not quite so attentive and regular in these things as they might be, and, indeed, as they ought to be. For did we reflect upon the very evil and disordered state of the world, the impurity of our own proprium, and its proneness to selfish indulgence and the neglect of religious duties; with the necessity of our regeneration, and of our continually co-operating with the LORD for effecting it; we should inwardly feel, as well as clearly see, the importance of attending to the various means and duties, which are so powerfully, as well as mercifully calculated to separate us from the evils of the world, to subdue our impure propensities, and advance our purification and continual approximation to the heavens. The worship of the LORD, and keeping holy the day of the LORD, are solemnly ordained and commanded by Him. No justifiable apology can be made for neglecting the one or the other. When New Church professors appear careless, inattentive, and negligent as to these important duties, what does their religion and piety amount to? In long-established professors, such an example is most injurious to serious young minds, who need every encouragement and stimulus to proceed in the paths of duty. It is a question of divine inspiration,—“How shall a young man cleanse his way?” and the answer is, “By taking heed, according to thy Word.”†

* Psalm i. 1, 2.

† Psalm cxix. 9.

And to take heed according to the Word, is to obey it, follow its directions, and live as it commands. In so doing, we are sure to be right; in doing otherwise, we are as sure to be wrong, and to be wrong, is to step out of the path which leads to happiness and heaven! There is no danger in doing what is good; but there is great danger in NOT doing what is good. The goats on the left hand of the LORD were not so much condemned for doing evil, as for not doing what was good.* So important is it to endeavour to "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD, blameless."† Be it your care, my young friends, thus to walk, and you will honour the God you serve, do credit to the Church to which you belong, and be honoured with the greater approbation, and superior felicities, of your only LORD, in his kingdom for ever!

There is one other subject upon which I would offer a word or two of advice. As young members of the LORD's New Church, male and female, it is reasonable to suppose, and quite in order, that you will turn your minds to that conjugal union which your Creator and your God has appointed and ordained. You cannot be unaware of the very great importance of this relation, and that it demands very serious consideration. Being by your mutual faith frequently brought into association, you will do well to mark distinctly the line between your brotherly and sisterly relation in the LORD, as members of his Church; and the relation of persons of a different sex looking towards marriage. If an acquaintance should take place, let it be conducted on both sides with the greatest regard to propriety and respectful behaviour. Too close a familiarity before marriage is hurtful to the mind.

As to the various low motives and ends for which young persons, in the present evil and disorderly state of human nature, enter into marriage, I shall not take up your time by expatiating upon them, because, as members of the LORD's Church, you will be governed, I trust, by higher and more spiritual principles. For as to those who enter into matrimony from motives of self-interest, or for money, the heat of natural concupiscence, or merely worldly motives, theirs cannot properly be called a conjugal union, nor can true happiness be expected from it. It is much to be lamented that rational and immortal beings are so little acquainted with themselves, with spiritual subjects, and with the true nature of the conjugal union, as, unhappily, they

* Matt. xxv. 41—46.

† Luke i. 6.

are, and that almost universally; and also that in the present age, they are become so very sensual and depraved, as to pervert the holy institution of marriage into a mere outward connection of lust or interest, instead of being a blessed union of pure love and pure and mutual happiness! But you, my young friends, on entering into marriage, will act, I trust, upon very different principles. You are now made aware that natural marriages when in divine order, flow down from, and have their origin in, that pure divine love which is the source of the heavenly marriage, or the conjunction between the LORD and his Church. You are privileged to know, that one of the principal objects of the LORD's Second Coming, is to restore the heavenly conjugal principle, and thus to restore the institution of marriage to its original sanctity, and so to render it, in very deed and truth, "honourable in all things." When, therefore, you turn your thoughts to this important subject with a view to your own marriage, you will in the first place consider, that a union of heart and life, as to religion, is essential to the felicity of marriage. Not only must both be sincerely religious, but of one religion, as to principle, faith, and fundamental doctrine. There may be an external friendship, a natural affection, between two persons of different religious faith and doctrine, but I think there cannot be that internal union of souls which is implied in a pure conjugal love, or such a marriage as to constitute them truly A ONE; and to produce those felicities and delights, which our Divine Parent intended when He said of such, "They are no more twain, but one flesh."* A marriage of a member of the LORD's New Church with a Tripersonalist, a Unitarian, a Calvinist, or the like, I conceive would not be a very happy one! Therefore let your care be to look out for, and fix your minds upon, one who is in the same faith with yourself; but do not do this in the spirit of self-dependence, but in full dependence upon the LORD's good Providence;—as an advanced Christian lady once said,—“Do not look from self to a conjugal partner; but look to a conjugal partner through the LORD.” And when thus determined, you will do well to take every precaution, and make all possible discrimination, to ascertain that in the person of your choice, there is every reasonable prospect of a congenial mind, not only as to principle, doctrine, and life, but also,—for this is of some consequence,—as to situation, circumstances, habits, taste, and disposition; and

* Matt. xix. 6.

not only so, but how far the intellectual powers and faculties of the mind are such as to promise a desirable companion, a bosom friend, and a partner calculated to advise and assist you, as well as to bless, delight, and make you happy, through all the vicissitudes of life. These are circumstances which young persons are apt to overlook, or to attend to less carefully than they should do, for they are of very great importance in the married state, so much so, that I do not see how it can be truly happy if these are absent. But in order to your success in effecting a union that is all that a religious and spiritual mind can desire, you must fervently look up to the LORD Jesus Christ for direction, that in forming the marriage union, you may be under the influence of his divine care and wisdom; for as such union is of his appointment, and as all pure conjugal love flows down from Him only, so if you are spiritually conjoined with Him, and your hearts are ardently desirous to be under his blessed influence and direction, there is little doubt that you will be so blessed and directed by the LORD, as to make a prudent and happy choice. And as the LORD is pleased sometimes to communicate his divine aids mediately, you might with advantage consult experienced and affectionate relatives and friends, especially of the New Church, seeing that it is a matter of such consequence that you will require the best possible information for your guidance. And in this, as well as in all other events of life, be assured, that you will never ask the Divine guidance in vain, provided you make it your constant care and delight to act in every situation of life consistently with your peculiar mercies and responsibilities. Avoid the follies and evils of the world. Be attentive to the duties of religion, obedient to the divine laws, diligent in useful activities, zealous to promote the LORD's cause, anxious to advance your own regeneration, and to improve your talents and mercies, and thus to honour that God who has called you out of the world, brought you into his own heavenly fold, and is leading you every moment by his hand to the New heavens of eternal glory. Constantly bear in mind, that while you faithfully love and serve Him, you will be under his Divine protection and blessing, and all the events and circumstances of your lives will be overruled for good, and so ordered by his Infinite wisdom and goodness, that whether single or married, or in whatever state you may be, all will tend to prepare you for the enjoyment of unspeakable felicity, abounding and ever-increasing, in his own presence and king-

dom for ever! "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."^{*}

SECTION XVI.

RECREATIONS, PLEASURES, AND AMUSEMENTS.

IT is no difficult matter to become acquainted with the general subjects, doctrines, and leading truths of the Church; but we are not quite so ready to attend to those more particular duties of life, and minute points of conduct, which are included or implied in those general subjects and doctrines; but which are indispensably necessary to make up the true, and complete Christian character. Whatever some sorts of religious people may think, the members of the New Church will do well to conclude, that in the present evil and erring state of human nature, with the corrupt and impure bias and strong propensities of our own proprium, there is much need of circumspection, religious care, and self-denial, that we neither retard our own regeneration, set an improper example, nor by any means contribute to hinder the reception of divine truth and the success of the LORD's Church. Subjects, these, which ought ever to lie so near our hearts, as to lead us not only to do every thing in our power to promote goodness and piety, but also to avoid, and to deny ourselves of some things pleasing to the natural mind, which might have a tendency to prevent our success. It may be thought that the spiritual Christian of the New Church is as much at liberty, and is as much intitled to indulge himself in the common amusements, pleasures, and gratifications of the age, as other persons; but verily if he have not a taste far above and beyond them, his spirituality, at best, is only at its commencement. Suppose we make a practice of joining in what is called a friendly party on the LORD'S DAY, to spend the afternoon by a ride or a walk into the country, take refreshment at some public place and return home in the evening; we may think there is no harm in this; it is, in itself, not improper, or inconsistent with our principles; but is it, or is it not a breaking of the commandment which enjoins us to keep that day holy in all things? Do we not in thus acting, "do our own will, speak

^{*} Psalm xxv. 10.

our own words," trifle away the time; neglect religious worship; and is not the natural man indulged and fed, while the spiritual man is neglected? And moreover, do we not hereby encourage others in like conduct, and at the same time give religious characters around us no very favourable opinion of our profession, principles, and doctrines? And if so, do we not do wrong ourselves, and contribute to prevent the reception of our holy truths? Let this conduct only be seriously considered, and we must see the impropriety, yea, the evil of it. When we consider the influence of example; the necessity of using all religious means for promoting our own regeneration, with the eternal benefits to be derived from a faithful attention to divine laws and ordinances, we must perceive the impropriety of that conduct which does not set a good example, which does not promote, but hinder our regeneration, which thus robs us, in some degree, of eternal benefits; the very least of which must surely be of immensely more consequence than a little natural indulgence! And permit me to ask, who shall pay a due reverence to the holy day, the divine institutions, and the sacred injunctions of Jesus Christ our LORD, if New Church Christians do not, who are favoured with such superlative mercies, and under such high and holy obligations? We are too prone to make apologies for, and find arguments in vindication of, improprieties in external life. We have a false witness within, a special pleader in their favour, namely, our own self-will and self-love.

Did we ever know a truly religious man keep race horses; or make bets upon them? I think I may say—No. And what is the object of races? Why, evidently to win money, and in order to do this, what deceit, artifice, and gambling are practised! Add to this, the inhuman spectacle of sagacious, beautiful, and useful animals whipped and spurred almost to death, to gratify the low tastes of—shall I say—rational beings? What possible fellowship can any spiritual man have, or what sympathy can he feel, with such pursuits and scenes as these? None whatever! As well might angels have a taste for what is infernal! I will not notice the pleas for horse-racing which are sometimes advanced: I am not against athletic sports by which the body is strengthened, and the spirit recreated, only I say, beware in what company you seek these amusements, lest, while the body is benefited, the better part, the mind, receive injury. Beware, also, of following them to excess, lest needful application to business be relaxed, on the

one hand, and the spiritual appetites become dull and feeble on the other.

Whatever was the original design of theatrical amusements, or what those amusements were in the purest ages of the world, there is abundant reason to believe they were very different from those existing at present. The object of the proprietors of theatres is to get money; consequently they will study to introduce upon the stage such plays as are calculated to fill the house. Hence it must happen that performances will often be presented which vitiate the taste, or gratify the taste already vitiated. Is it then consistent for the Christian, who is to shun every appearance of evil, improve his time, and set the best example, to make a practice of frequenting theatrical amusements? If to refrain be a cross to the natural man, will it not be far better, more consistent with a right state, and with a consciousness of doing well, to take up the cross, and deny ourselves. Were the stage in a state of moral order, and its exhibitions so decent and rational as in no way to contaminate the mind, or border upon vice and evil, I should have nothing to say against now and then partaking of the amusement; but this it must be confessed, is far from being the case. If it be asked, —Is it wrong for young men and young women of a religious turn of mind, or belonging to religious parents of the New Church, to visit these places? To this question, I would reply, —it may not be amiss for such young persons to see a play of a decent and moral kind, or even several, if desired: but at the same time they should be made acquainted with those substantial reasons which exist against frequenting them as a practice; and if they are really religiously minded, sincere recipients of our doctrines and principles, they will presently perceive the true general character of such amusements in the present impure state of the public taste, and totally relinquish them.

In regard to card-playing. I allow that young persons, and indeed older ones, need a little relaxation, or amusements, to exhilarate and gratify the natural man, and I should be sorry to suggest any unreasonable restriction. How far a few sober and religious persons may indulge themselves an hour or two in an evening at a game of cards, by playing for mere amusement, and not for the sake of lucre, may deserve consideration and command exception. And while we endeavour to guard against what is really wrong, we should be careful not to deny what is innocent. But still it is well known that cards, espe-

cially with young people, are very fascinating. A fondness for them increases in proportion to the habit of using them, and too frequently the attachment grows so strong, that not only proper seasons, but improper ones, are spent at the card table. There are some lovers of the game who when once set down to play, can willingly hold it on till midnight, and even then rise with reluctance. And when this undue fondness takes place, the mind is so much employed upon the sport, that it is too often unfitted for, or it too frequently neglects more important concerns, and the necessary duties of life, and especially the holier duties of religion. Neither is this all. There is something still more hurtful attends an excessive partiality for card-playing; and that is, that those times which should be devoted to reading, meditation, religious conversation, and improvement, are too often taken up with this seductive amusement. Nor must we omit to notice the bad effects it has upon certain tempers, which too easily become irritated and cross, through the disappointment of their love of victory.

That the amusement is not very rational, it must be admitted, and as to its being a waste of time, this much depends upon the season of playing, and the length of time so employed. It is very true that time is not to be trifled with; it is short enough in itself, and we have a great work to do while it lasts; but the same objection will apply to every other relaxation and natural indulgence; we may err on one hand, as well as on the other. A word more on the strong objection to card-playing expressed by those who denominate themselves "the Religious world." The Apostle reasons well when he says, a thing may be lawful, but not expedient, nor tend to edification; therefore he adds, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's well-being*;" that is, rather than seek our own gratification and indulgence, let us deny ourselves for the sake of others, that by our example and self-denial we may promote their eternal good.

When, then, we take the subject of card-playing into serious consideration, as serious and spiritual members of the New Church; when we reflect how fascinating cards are to very many who certainly ought to know better, and that a fondness for them increases with the practice; that too much valuable time is frequently taken up by them; that many ill consequences incidentally arise from them; that we never heard of apostles,

* 1 Cor. x. 23, 24.

primitive Christians, or other truly pious persons, playing at cards, or similar exciting and profitless games; that our playing might hurt serious minds, and prevent our spiritual uses towards them; that we can do very well without it; that it is not necessary for our good, and borders upon evil, and too often leads into it; and that we, of all Christians, should be circumspect, free from the appearance of evil, exact, orderly, and truly religious in all manner of conversation and conduct;—if we seriously consider these things, and reflect how important self-denial is, as to ourselves and for the sake of others, I think we shall see it right to be very cautious how we indulge ourselves in the case now before us; if, indeed, we do not totally refrain from it, as inexpedient, hurtful to others, and too trifling to engage the mind, or employ the time of christians to whom the glories, the entertainments, and the pleasures of heaven are opened, and who are in their regenerative progress to the gates of those heavens, and the possession of their boundless felicities for ever!

SECTION XVII.

THE CONDUCT OF NEW CHURCH CHRISTIANS IN THE WORLD, AND THEIR VARIOUS CONCERNS WITH MANKIND.

A New Church Christian, to be so, must be a consistent character. The doctrines and truths he avows should lead him to a propriety, purity, and order of life best calculated to prepare and qualify him for the sublime enjoyments and extensive uses of heaven's eternal kingdom. His conduct in the world, and his connection with men, when thus regulated, is essential to his preparation for the enjoyments and uses of the Lord's kingdom in the heavens. Consequently, not any thing can be of more essential importance than the regulation of our conduct consistently with true religion, and the laws and rules of divine revelation. Permit me, then, my brethren, to remind you of some particular circumstances which we are all too prone to forget, or not properly attend to. We are but just emerging out of the falsehood, darkness, and error which so universally abound, with the follies, evils, and iniquities which have consummated the former dispensation, and brought it to its judg-

ment and end; and we may reasonably conclude we have brought too much of our former habits, concupiscences, and propensities along with us. And therefore, as our illuminated Author informs us, "that to wash the disciples' feet was a token of humility, to denote the cleansing another from evils, as from filth*," so I feel encouraged to endeavour to assist my brethren in this very important work, in certain particulars, it being my ardent desire that all my brethren, as well as myself, should "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Whether we do so, or not, I know we ought to do so. I shall therefore begin with smaller things, and then proceed to higher and more important ones.

It is certainly a fact, that New Church Christians are "men wondered at."† We are looked upon as very different from other christian people; as either enthusiasts, visionaries, or the disciples of a madman; and consequently our conduct and behaviour will be strictly noticed. If we appear among men upon the reserve, or gloomy and unsociable, it will be said our religion has made us melancholy, and would have the like effect upon others, and therefore should be avoided as a dangerous system.—If our conduct be frank and cheerful, it will probably be pronounced light and frivolous; and if really bordering upon levity, we shall be ranked with men of the world, and considered as having no religion, except in mere name and profession. Such being the case, there certainly is a decorum, a mediate propriety to be attended to in our connection with the world. We should avoid the rigid precision and stiffness of the Pharisee on the one hand, and a too light and volatile character on the other. A prudent cheerfulness in company, with a freedom of conversation and civility of manners, will always be pleasing and commendable, and be felt as every way consistent with genuine religion and the christian character. It is well to conciliate the esteem and respect of others, and to give them a favourable opinion of our religion. It is true that much depends upon the natural disposition; some are prone to be communicative, light, and airy in their manner,—others to be taciturn and reserved. These extremes we should endeavour to rectify, and to make ourselves agreeable in company and in our transactions with mankind. Although certainly of minor consideration, agreeable manners carry an importance with them, not only in a natural and civil point of view, but also in a re-

* Arcana Cœlestia, 3147.

† Zech. iii. 8.

ligious one; because the more our company and conversation are approved by respectable persons, the better opportunity shall we have of introducing higher subjects to their notice, and the more readily will they be attended to. Permit me also to remind you, that it is highly necessary for every New Churchman, in all his concerns and connections with the world, to strictly guard against, and avoid, even the appearance of duplicity, deceit, falsehood, and prevarication. It may be thought that in certain situations of life it is impossible to avoid something of this kind. It may be difficult, I admit, but, with God's help, it is not impossible. That much duplicity is practised in the business of the world is too true. Almost in all merchandize, business, and trade, duplicity and prevarication are to be found; and as to deceiving and falsehood, hardly any thing is more common. The question, however, is not what men do; but what WE OUGHT TO DO as christian men. If for the sake of interest I can represent any thing in a light which I know it does not merit, or depreciate any thing below its real value for the same end; or if I can utter words which I know to be not true, in order to put off what I want to dispose of, I may plead custom, habit, and say there is no harm; but the fact is, I am deceiving my neighbour to his injury; I am guilty of duplicity and falsehood; and I commit a real evil and sin against God and man! How is it possible for me to suppose that I love my neighbour as myself, and do to others as I would have them do to me, when at the same time I am acting from the love of self, and doing that which if I knew another did to me, I would deal with him no more? Civility and openness of conduct are amiable qualifications in the christian man; but where is my civility, my open conduct, if I can deceive, tell falsehoods, and take advantage of my neighbour with no better reason than that others do the same? Is this preparing the mind for an entrance into the spiritual world, where no duplicity, deceit, or falsehood can be admitted, but where the most secret and hidden purposes of the internal will be manifested in the external, and the man appear, not that which he is not, but that which he really is? How little do we consider these things, my brethren, in our common transactions in the world! Too often do we suffer custom and habit to prevail over rectitude and sincerity, without reflecting upon their nature and consequences, as to ourselves and others! Surely this is not good. It must be avoided. Can we be real Christians, the followers and servants

of Jesus Christ, if we are not conscientious Christians? A good man is an honest man; he is just and upright in heart and life; and in the truest sense of the word, he is a man of the strictest honour, the most unflinching integrity. And if we are honest men, we shall act and speak honestly in all things. And if so, our conduct must be governed, not by human maxims, custom, or habit, but by the laws of eternal truth written in our conscience. These must be our rule: and the laws of eternal truth will certainly teach us to relinquish all duplicity, deceit, and falsehood, and to be candid, sincere, and strictly honest and honourable in all our concerns. A good man is a just man, because to act from good is to be just. The essence of goodness is love. If then I love goodness, I shall love to do good; I shall love whatever is of good; and proceeds from good. Consequently whatever is not of good, but contrary to it, I shall detest and avoid. I shall be a just man, that is, in my external conduct with all men and in all cases, whether of business and trade, profit or loss, in great things and in small, I shall be strictly just; justice will be my polar star, and the love of goodness will keep my eye fixed upon it. When, therefore, we duly consider what constitutes the heavenly and divine marriage, and thus what it is that makes the true spiritual Christian of the LORD's New Church, namely, the union of faith and charity, truth and good, love and wisdom, we shall readily perceive what these lead to, and what the outward conduct of such a Christian is, and must be. Faith and truth will impel him to be strictly sincere and honest; charity and love will impel him to be strictly just and upright; and the divine union of these in the internal will so regulate his affections and thoughts, words and deeds, in all cases, and with all men, that his external conduct and life will be like that of the King's daughter,—“Her raiment is of needle work; and her clothing of wrought gold.”* How amiable must such a Christian appear, and how calculated to exercise a beneficial influence upon all within his sphere of action, and therefore how much respected and esteemed! Even bad men cannot help feeling a partiality for those who are good, honest, sincere, and just; because they find their own interest in such honesty and justice, so far as they have concerns and connections with them. While, therefore, such conduct essentially promotes the Christian's own peace, regeneration, and preparation for heaven, it, at the same time,

* Psalm xlv. 13, 14.

recommends his religious principles and doctrines to acceptance. Thus may we daily be doing good to ourselves, our neighbours, to the world, and to the kingdom of God. And are not these blessed, important, and grand objects powerful enough to prevail upon us conscientiously and resolutely to avoid all duplicity, deception, falsehood, and whatever borders upon what is dishonourable; and to be in all things strictly sincere, honest, and just? Undoubtedly they are. And this also will lead to our becoming examples of christian punctuality, by our uniform attention to all points of duty, however minute, and especially our promises, and even our implied engagements; remarkable for our faithfulness in all our concerns, under all possible circumstances, being animated and led by the holy principles of charity and faith from the LORD. And here let me remark, that it is not only necessary to have these great principles developed in the internal man, by shunning all evils as sins, but in order that the external man may effectively co-operate with the internal, as well as be subject to it; and in order that it may be a firm basis to it; the external man must be formed by the development of his own proper, orderly principles. How this is done we may learn from the example of men of refined civilization, properly called gentlemen; men who uniformly act from true principles of honour, according to the best current ideas of what is right, although, unhappily for them, their internal man remains closed through the want of a religious faith, as the required medium of its being opened. Here, then, we see a well formed external, but without life from the internal. Now what a New Church Christian requires, is such an ultimate basis as this to be formed in his external man, in order that his internal man may rest securely upon it, and act vigorously therein, as the principal in its instrumental, answering, comparatively, to "a sound mind in a sound body." This basis can only be formed by acting at the same time from the law of charity in the internal, and the law of honour in the external; for then, at the same time, the good of religion will be formed in the internal, and the good of civilization in the external; and thus most effectively will the natural become permanently serviceable to the spiritual by means of its good of civilization. And let no one suppose, because he thinks he has and cultivates the higher principle of charity, that it is at all the less necessary to cultivate the secondary principle of true honour, for this latter should ever be found in the greatest perfection in the

true christian, of whom it has been justly said, that he alone is the true and perfect gentleman, and "the highest style of man." We may see the great importance of this natural good of civilization from this circumstance,—that the manifestation of the New Church was delayed until civilization had so far advanced as to afford it a suitable basis,—a sure proof of the necessity for every recipient to go on perfecting and strengthening that basis in himself. Besides this, the cultivation of a sense of honour, and of gentlemanly feelings and manners—which equally befits every rank of society without exception,—will greatly tend to banish feuds and misunderstandings. We must not allow ourselves to regard courtesy of manners merely as a worldly accomplishment, for our author speaks of the courtesy of behaviour shewn by angels, as the beautiful expression of their interior holiness. When the conscience of the internal man is well formed by the pure law of God, while the true principle of honour, habitually regarded, forms the conscience of the natural man, the whole man stands fit for every noble work of use, divine or human. The habits of life thus generated will also lead to what is very much wanted in argumentative discussions,—that is, a courteous politeness, combined with honesty,—an honest hatred of sophistry, or the dishonest perversion of another's meaning; this honesty in argument will be shewn in a wish to understand, and do full justice to, another's sentiments. The love of moral truth and honour is the indispensable basis for the pure love of spiritual truth for its own sake.

My brethren will, I am sure, see the great importance of the conduct I have recommended, as it respects their own spiritual states, their usefulness in the world, and the success of that blessed cause, which, of all others, is to them of the highest interest and importance. And when they consider what an effect example has upon society, for good as well as ill, they will dare to be singular in a good and righteous cause. They will not overlook the real character of many customs and habits, which, by being so very general, and practised by almost every class of men, are not closely scrutinized, nor their consequences considered, and therefore they are accounted as venial. Let us make it our care to examine how far this is right, or that wrong, noting the minutest particulars of our general conduct, in order to see that in all things it is just and good—consistent at the same time with the laws of true honour, and with the laws and rules of divine Revelation. Thus shall we maintain untarnished,

the exalted character and life of those highly-favoured Christians, who through infinite mercy have "entered into the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," and into which "there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."* I conclude this section with this remark, that unless men are what they ought to be in the affairs of the world, they will not be what they ought to be in the affairs of the church. He who deceives his customer, will deceive his fellow-members whenever it suits his purpose. Well has it been said by a great moralist, that "Truth—perfect truth in conduct—is the only band of union, and the basis of human happiness."

SECTION XVIII.

COMPANY AND CONVERSATION.

It is a just observation of a very sensible and elegant writer of the New Church, that "In the degree we acquire the life of truth, every thing that is false will excite aversion: and in the degree that we love goodness, evil will be held in abhorrence."* While we are in this world we are surrounded with and dwell among "the children of iniquity and the sons of error." The whole world lieth in wickedness. Every one is prone to transgress. Darkness covers the earth. Selfishness and evil of every description abound. To associate by choice with those who regard not God, and only regard man to make a prey of him, is far more dangerous than to enter a house where the plague is. In either case it is almost impossible to escape infection of a slight, if not of a serious nature. Nevertheless, in our present situations, connections, employments, and temporal concerns, it is not possible to be totally and constantly separated from every evil character and depraved mind. It is necessary for the best of men to perform natural and temporal uses, not only for their own sakes, but for the benefit of their relatives,

* Rev. xxi. 2, 27.

† *Dissertations on the Regenerate Life*, by James Arbouni, Esq., which may be had of the publisher of this volume.

families, and society in general. Neither our principles nor our doctrines teach us to live an unsocial, inactive, or useless life. Our blessed LORD said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them OUT OF THE WORLD, but that thou shouldest keep them from THE EVIL: they are not of the world even as I am not of the world."* As, therefore, the spiritual members of the New Church must needs while here be active and useful amongst men, and frequently mix with very uncongenial characters, it seems highly necessary for us to consider what may be the best and most proper manner of conducting ourselves in all cases. In the first place, if in our concerns with the world, we are careful not to associate with uncongenial characters except when absolutely necessary, the necessity of the case will not only justify us, but the desire not to associate except when necessary, will powerfully guard against our being injured by the contact. Nor is this all; for when in such company, this state of mind will lead us to the business in hand, dispose us to discharge it as soon as possible, and inspire us with a desire to withdraw from a sphere so uncongenial to our states and affections. In this case there will be little danger of contamination, because the natural man and its concerns will be sanctified by the principles of the internal spiritual man, and act under their controul and government. The danger is not so much in the connection with such characters, as in the motives or end we have in view by that connection. If our motive be selfish, the world our object, and mere money-getting our end, then, indeed, with all our religious knowledge and faith, there is danger; because we carry along with us, and suffer to operate, those very dispositions which govern evil and depraved characters, and which lead them into the indulgence of evils and immoralities from which we have conscientiously refrained! But if our motive or end in the common concerns and engagements of life be of a pure and spiritual nature, we shall be in no danger. If we act from the love of uses, and the good of uses be our motive or end, notwithstanding that good may be of a worldly and temporal nature, our end will be good, because we desire and intend to promote human happiness. When a spiritual Christian associates with the uncongenial and impure men of the world at such times only, and on such occasions, as are really expedient and necessary; and when he is acting from the love of uses, and with an intent to do good, he stands in a position somewhat similar to

* John xvii. 15, 16.

that of an angel when he descends by Divine command into the midst of a host of infernals, to quell their insurrection and prevent their enormities ; for he neither feels their sphere nor fears any defilement from their pollutions. The divine sphere of love and wisdom which surrounds him, forms an impenetrable and irresistible defence against ten thousand hells, although he be in the very midst of them. So let the man of the LORD's New Church carry along with him this divine sphere, by acting from the pure love of uses, and to promote the good of uses, and then he will be as secure from defilement, and as free from danger, in whatever company he may be, as if he were led thereto in the regular order of Divine providence. He is in the path of duty, and that is ever the blessed path of peace and safety. There is another circumstance which is attended with much greater danger of spiritual injury than the former. With some persons, who are nevertheless religiously disposed, there is a constitutional disposition of the natural mind which gives them a particular, or more than usual fondness for company, and this without any proper discrimination of character ; or any further care than that those with whom they associate shall be as to externals agreeable, and in similar respectability of station. Hence they make it a regular practice to spend the evening, perhaps three or four times in the week, more or less, at some tavern or public house, where a certain set of neighbours make it a rule to meet, and where, the paper of the day, politics, or business, are the topics, with much desultory and unprofitable conversation. Thus he spends two or three hours ; drinks what he thinks fit ; and returns home to his family with a head full of news, party politics, and common place anecdotes, which can in no way promote either his spiritual or temporal interest. Hereby the natural mind is filled and overcharged with mere worldly, trifling, useless subjects, jumbled together probably without order ; so that there is little or no room for spiritual and useful subjects to enter, or if they do, they are thrust out again by the next evening's uncongenialities. Moreover, it is hardly possible to associate with such various characters and worldly-minded men, without joining in their idle and useless conversation, or without having the inferior propensities inflamed and strengthened by undue and unsanctified activity ; so that not only the time is thrown away, but it is badly spent ; no real good is acquired ; but evil and defilement, more or less, assuredly will be. Were I to hear of a New Churchman fre-

quently associating at such places and in such company, without real necessity, and that it is a custom agreeable and pleasurable to him, I could not help fearing that the true Christian life in him is at a very low ebb, if he have any life at all.—The only, if not the best time for religious and spiritual improvement, with the man of business, is in the still hours of the evening, when the labour of the day is over; and the best place for such spiritual improvement, is in the retirement of our own habitation. If company be desired by a religious man, let him choose for his companions those who are consistently religious, strictly honourable and moral, and as intelligent and well-informed as may be, and the place where they meet will be of little consequence. With these, all that is necessary as to news, business, and the like, may be innocently discussed, and time be left for spiritual and more important topics. From such a meeting the good man may go home edified, refreshed, and delighted; but assuredly the less he associates with opposite characters, the better will it be for him, and the less will he be exposed to contamination and defilement.—Necessity is one thing, choice is another. Where necessity requires, the mind must comply. Where choice dictates—there is the love. If the truly spiritual Christian be under the obligation to associate at times with inferior characters, they will never be the company of his choice, nor their converse be pleasing to his mind. This leads me to a few words on conversation. When a truly religious man from necessary causes, is in company with those who are of a different character, he will probably have little or nothing to say, and for two reasons; first, their conversation will be no way pleasing to him; and, secondly, his conversation would be unpalatable to them. If, therefore, he converses at all, it will be from politeness and civility, that he may not appear singular and unsociable. But on these occasions the Christian man will take the opportunity, should it offer, to turn the conversation to more profitable subjects; he will watch the proper moment to introduce somewhat important of a rational, or moral, or, if prudent and suitable, of a religious nature; for not unfrequently some, or even much good has been done in this way. I will mention two or three instances, just to show how good may be done by thus turning the conversation when a good opportunity offers, and seasonably dropping a serious word or two. Not many years past, on a journey, I stopped at an inn; a gentleman or two, with two or three farmers, were present, it being market

day. The landlord of the house being in the room, asked me a question, which led me to make a religious remark. An elderly farmer, a man of property, who lived three or four miles from the town, listened to my discourse, and began to ask me several questions. I found he had never seriously thought about religion or eternity; I therefore conversed with him seriously, and opened such spiritual subjects as I conceived might be useful to him, and in this way I conversed with him about an hour. The farmer acknowledged he felt what he never felt before, and was unable to express the sensations of his mind. He wished to see me again, or have advice from me. I sent him a few books which I thought best suited his state; and I understood afterwards that he became quite another man, devoting himself to a serious and religious life; and that he was called into eternity about five or six months after this interview. So great is the good arising from "a word in due season."

Another instance of a similar kind took place, perhaps within a year of the former. I was in company with some gentlemen in London among whom was a very rich Jew, who stood high amongst his brethren, but as to religion,—of this he seemed to know little or nothing. I watched an opportunity, and introduced something concerning Israel as mentioned in the Word. The Jew replied, and I proceeded, until I freely stated to him the awful error they were under respecting the Messiah, and entered into the essential doctrines of the holy Word, particularly of the Old Testament. The three subjects which I chiefly dwelt upon, were the sole divinity of Jesus Christ; the true nature of man; and the resurrection. This eminent Jew was so affected, and astonished at what he heard, that he was brought into a state of mind such as I cannot explain; nor could he himself describe! However, the discourse appeared to have a very great effect upon him, and he would have had me to his house, and to be with him constantly had this been possible, but his lady and his brethren prevented my visits. He left the world in a few months after.

I will only add, that as religious characters, it will be expedient for us to be guarded in our conversation, especially in the company of men who are in an opposite state of life. At such times "a still tongue makes a wise head." But if a word can be seasonably introduced, let us not be afraid or ashamed to speak. "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him show out of a good conversation his

works with meekness of wisdom.”* I need not say how necessary it is, when as religious brethren of the same community we meet together, that our conversation be of a spiritual and profitable nature: at such seasons we should study, not merely to pass the time pleasantly, still less to make a display of our ability, but should strive after mutual improvement and edification. I add some pertinent remarks of the author before mentioned. “Here again disappointment too often prevails. The conversation takes a desultory turn. The ideas that flow from the sacred fountain of divine revelation are listened to for a moment, and are often in a moment dispersed to give way to some trifling incident, or to the record of some dull fact. Thus it happens that the purpose of social religious meetings is frequently interrupted and drawn aside by intruding subjects of little moment; whereas, were only a few friends to meet, whose minds are open to eternal views, and whose hearts are won over to eternal interests, continued and varied satisfaction would arise from animated communications on sublime and useful subjects, which would spread a stillness over the mind and elevate its enjoyments. By frequent conversations of this nature among friends at evening, the mind is buoyed up and kept in its proper element; it is refreshed with returns of gratitude to the Divine Providence, is expanded with neighbourly love, and becomes more and more fitted for heaven!”—It may not be out of place to add, that in order to render conversation either profitable or pleasing, we should be “swift to hear and slow to speak.” It is astonishing how rarely we meet with a patient listener, who conscientiously endeavours fully and clearly to understand what is said to him, in order that he may do justice to the speaker by replying pointedly and to the purpose. A patient listener is one who feels that justice is as truly and properly concerned and called for in the intercourse of the mind, as in the intercourse of business. Indeed a truly just man is just on all occasions. Truth in word, as well as in deed, he ever regards with reverence.

* James iii. 13.

SECTION XIX.

THE "PROPRIUM" OF MAN, SOMETIMES DESIGNATED THE
"SELFHOOD."

IN this Section I shall direct my observations more particularly to those persons who are junior members of the Church, or who have not been any great length of time acquainted with the doctrine, and consequently are not much advanced in states of the regenerate life. As to the proper definition or explanation of the proprium of man, with its hereditary tendencies and propensities derived from parents, and its appropriated evils and fuses, I shall not enter upon this now, it having been set before us by our illuminated Author in various parts of his writings; it is the manifestation, operation, and effects of the proprium in the external mind and outward life, which I intend to notice here. It is very common for us to speak disparagingly of our own proprium or selfhood; and we are ready to call it stubborn, obstinate, depraved, and even infernal. All this is very well so far as it goes, but there is something more than this to be said and done, otherwise we may continue to exclaim against it without any good effect. Instead of satisfying ourselves with calling it this or that, we should rather watch its manifestations, how it operates, and what are the consequences of its operation; in so doing we should get it weakened, subdued, and brought into habitual subjection. I have heard much said about proprium where little has been done to correct it;—mere talk,—nothing more! If we would have a correct knowledge of the quality of our own proprium, connected with an earnest desire that it may be subdued, we must watch its appearances in the external, and resolutely oppose and resist them. We shall then co-operate with the Lord in the work of our regeneration, and our selfhood will in due time become submissive, orderly, and in its right place, that is, undermost, and there perform its proper uses. Now we must know, if we properly reflect, that our corrupt and depraved proprium brings forth the vile fruits of pride, envy, resentment, passion, anger, revenge, an unforgiving temper, and the rest, not to mention the more gross and public iniquities it produces. If then, my brethren, we would not only complain of, but have our propriums subdued, we must very carefully attend to those particular evil qualities to which it

gives us the strongest propensity, and makes us especially liable, and then one person will discover that pride and high thoughts predominate in him ; another, that passion, a hasty, angry spirit prevails ; another, that envy and a covetous disposition too much rules ; and another, that he is of an unforgiving temper, apt to bear malice against those who offend him, and so on. Now, if we would look into ourselves, and observe what particular qualities of an evil nature have an influence on our conduct, this would be going a considerable way towards a deliverance from the bondage of the proprium ; but the misfortune is, that with an eagle's eye we can see these qualities in others ; while we are almost blind to them in ourselves. To search out diligently ; and impartially examine, with a perfect willingness to perceive the particular impure qualities of our own proprium ; is a work very rarely performed. We have other names for these qualities in ourselves, and plenty of apologies in excuse of them. Are we proud, we can easily call it a proper manly spirit ; are we warm or passionate, it is but justice to ourselves and to the truth ; are we unforgiving, it is only a suitable testimony against wrong doing ; are we parsimonious, it is but necessary prudence and a wise economy ; are we in great haste to become rich, it is a desire to extend our usefulness ; are we given to extravagance, it is our generous and social disposition ! Thus we can reason in our own favour ; but it must not be so with New Church Christians. We are clearly instructed concerning the qualities of the unregenerate proprium, and we know that they are of an infernal nature—that they proceed from, and connect us with, infernal spirits ; are in direct opposition to the Word and kingdom of Jesus Christ our God, and also to our own true happiness in this world, and the world to come. Therefore, instead of complaining of our proprium, merely, let us search out these bad effects of it in ourselves, and resist them, cease from the indulgence of them ; and cordially “hate father and mother for the LORD's sake,”—that is, abhor the hereditary principles of our proprium, the evil and the false, and all the sons and daughters produced by that unhappy conjunction, or every quality of the false that warps the judgment ; and every evil disposition that depraves the will and defiles its actions. This is the only way to separate ourselves from infernal companionship ; and approximate to the angels. Pride will then gradually give place to humility ; anger and passion, to meekness ; resentment, to forbearance ; revenge, to mercy ; and

unforgiving temper, to forgiveness; harshness, to gentleness; envy and covetousness, to contentment and benevolence. Hence my brethren will permit me to remind them of three important considerations, which demonstrate how essential it is to subdue these external manifestations of our naturally corrupt and disordered proprium, namely, 1st. The sad effects of an unregulated proprium on earth: 2ndly. The consequences to our eternal state: 3rdly. The good effects of the due regulation of proprium.

And first, the sad consequences resulting from an unregulated proprium in civil and domestic life. Wherever impure qualities are indulged, and suffered to come forth, they are certain to produce more or less of disorder and misery. Pride, a haughty and domineering spirit, produces the most lamentable disturbance and unhappiness in society and in families, by arousing and keeping in action a vehement spirit of opposition. Anger and passion are often most serious in their consequences, and never fail to occasion great uneasiness and distress. Envy, revenge, covetousness, and an unforgiving disposition, in a thousand forms disturb the peace of society. What grief, distress, and misery do all these infernal qualities bring upon families, putting an end to all domestic happiness and peace. We need no arguments in proof; we see too much of it almost every day; and if such be the miserable effects of proprium when unregulated, and we really desire to act from a heavenly principle of charity, surely we shall watch against the qualities which produce such painful effects, and pray against them, and fight against them, being fully assured that they are in direct opposition to that heavenly principle which should ever regulate and govern our conduct towards all men!

And, secondly, in considering the consequences of an unregulated proprium on our eternal state, I remark that the great business of our lives, as fallen creatures, is to resist and overcome the bad dispositions and qualities of our fallen nature. Divine truth and good can only descend into the natural man, and form a heavenly union there for the great purposes of our regeneration, as we put away the evils and falses of our selfhood. While we indulge and cherish these qualities, or any of them, we close our own minds against the divine operation, and hold ourselves in bondage to our spiritual enemies. We must therefore remember, that not only the peace and happiness of others, but our own peace and happiness are prevented by the

existence and operation of these dispositions, and the collisions they occasion. Can I be composed and happy, or reasonably expect the divine approbation, and look forward to an eternal state of felicity with any degree of confidence while I am suffering pride, envy, passion, resentment, or other bad dispositions, to bear rule, and come forth upon every occasion, or no occasion at all? Nay, must not the member of the LORD's Church who is acquainted with internal and spiritual subjects, perceive, and even feel, that these are the very things which must be subdued and cast out, in order to life everlasting? Can the divine truth and good of heaven descend into my natural mind for its purification and restoration, and there prepare an abode for themselves, if I suffer to dwell therein, and there cherish, these harpies, which would defile both the good and the true?—these thieves and robbers that would spoil all heavenly goods?—yea, these subtle enemies of my own household, who are ever seeking to prevent my restoration to the order and purity of heaven; and to destroy my peace and happiness for ever? Can the grace of humility abide where pride dwells? Can meekness reside with passion and anger? Can mercy be the companion of envy and resentment? or benevolence and charity fraternize with covetousness and an unforgiving temper? Let us be assured that these bad and impure dispositions of our proprium must be subdued and driven out of our mental house, in order that heavenly and divine graces may enter in; take up their residence finally; and bless the whole man. Our bad qualities are our worst and eternal enemies. They came from the infernal regions, and thither they tend! They are the curse and misery of their possessor both here and for ever! But the good qualities and graces are our best and eternal friends! They come down from the kingdom of God, and they lead us thither. They are the blessing and the happiness of their possessor while here, and afterwards to eternity!

If, then, my brethren, we are in earnest for that purification and spiritual restoration of all the powers and principles of our nature, which is so indispensable to our future felicity in the New heavens of Jesus Christ our LORD, be it our particular care to search out and to know what qualities, dispositions, and tempers of our fallen selfhood do yet remain unproved, and are not yet subdued and cast out; and then, being earnestly desirous that they may be rejected and conquered, we shall not only resist them, but unite with our resistance watchfulness and

prayer, and constantly look up to the LORD Jesus Christ for deliverance. "He will give us power over the nations, and we shall rule them with a rod of iron: as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers*;" and we shall eventually be able to say, with exultation and thankfulness, "The enemies we have seen to-day we shall see them again no more for ever."†

And, thirdly; I am to notice the good effects of regulating the proprium. If that principle of heaven,—charity,—which we properly denominate the essential principle of christianity and of heaven, be our ruling principle—and it must be so to constitute us real members of the LORD's Church,—then, considering that this principle is to be brought forth into the external life and conduct in proportion as the proprium is regulated, there are two most blessed and happy effects will arise from such regulation. In the first place, we shall study in all our feelings, words, and deeds, to avoid whatever has a tendency to offend, hurt, or grieve the mind of our neighbour, whether members of our own family, of the Church, or of society generally; for it is the very and essential nature of true charity or love, to bless all, and to wound none without painful necessity. As, therefore, we shall carefully avoid whatever would hurt or grieve another, we shall be equally desirous to do and say whatever we can to make others feel comfortable and happy. How earnestly shall we watch over ourselves that we suffer not any impure quality or temper of our proprium to manifest itself, and thus to wound and grieve a wife, a husband, a domestic, a friend, or a neighbour! Nay, should it come to pass that we unguardedly do so, we shall suffer in our own minds more than we cause another to feel, and find no rest until we have made all the reparation in our power. By such conduct we shall contribute to the peace and happiness of all with whom we have to do; and what a blessed state would society be in were all who think themselves religious people to act and live in this manner! And while as true spiritual Christians, our conduct is of this nature, originating in the heavenly principle of pure charity, by the power of which we diligently suppress and subdue the defiled qualities of our proprium, we are at the same time blessing ourselves, promoting our own comfort and peace, and successfully preparing for an entrance into the heavens, and through the LORD's mercy becoming more and more fully

* Rev. ii. 26, 27.

† Exod. xiv. 12.

qualified to enjoy that blessed state of purity and divine order;—of love and peace;—of use and felicity, where the divine principle of pure love to God and man universally reigns, and unites together the countless millions of happy spirits in the everlasting bonds of amity, friendship, and joy! May we then, my dear brethren, die to all of self; live to the LORD Jesus Christ alone; and be for ever blessed!

SECTION XX.

TAKING UP THE CROSS AND FOLLOWING THE LORD.

To take up a cross, and especially a cross that may continue through life, appears very forbidding and terrific to the natural man. He wants to escape all crosses, and to go on smoothly in his way through the world. He has no idea of denying himself any thing that opposes his life's love, but rather of indulging it to the utmost of his power; because, whatever opposes that, opposes what he calls his happiness. But not so with the reformed, the renewed, the spiritual man. He perceives an essential cause and necessity for taking up the cross; and the certain, the eternal good consequences to be derived from it. Let us for a moment consider what is this essential cause, and we shall be at no loss to discover it, namely, that we not only come into the world under the power of hereditary propensities to evil, impurity, and error, but also that, more or less, and for a longer or shorter period, we have cherished these propensities, acted under their influence, and thus appropriated many evils and fables into our own individual character. The natural mind being thus constituted before regeneration, is nothing but evil, impurity, and darkness, and these unceasingly strive to make self-love our ruling love; and since love is our life, yea, is the man himself, the enlightened mind must see the necessity of taking up the cross, to the end that this love and this life may be crucified, that so we may regain that life for which we were created, and in and from which only we can be blessed and happy. Hence our LORD said, "If any one will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, he shall find

it.* Now we know that for a man to deny himself, is to cease from his evils; and to take up his cross, is constantly to resist those evils, and every excitation to evil, and to sustain and overcome temptations: for as evils are of man's natural love, so long as that love has any prevalence and power, so long, and in that degree, will it be felt as a cross to resist and subdue it. Hence we are not only called upon by the LORD to take up our cross, but are required "to take it up DAILY."†—This implies, that in almost all states, and at all times, this important duty is necessary. Let us then inquire why this is necessary. It must be evident to every observant mind, that our natural love is not subdued and brought into order in a day, nor in a year; for, if I may use the expression, it hangs a long time on the cross before it is quite crucified! Now, every Christian, be his situation what it may, will frequently find in the present impure and disordered state of society, something or other to excite unduly his natural love, stir up evil concupiscence, irritate his temper, or call forth some evil propensity or impure delight. On account of these things it is that our religious garments so frequently get spotted, and we have to regret and deplore that we keep them no cleaner; and hereby our minds feel pain and compunction; our tranquillity is interrupted; and in our conscience we lament that we are so very imperfect, especially through the influence of some particular propensity, or disposition of the fallen natural mind. Hence we may plainly perceive how necessary it is to take up our cross daily; constantly to be upon our guard, and to determine that our natural love shall be mortified, whatever occasion or circumstance may excite its cupidities, so that no triumph on their part shall be suffered to cast a shade over our christian character, or disturb and hurt our minds. How oft has the good man made work for painful repentance, for want of taking up his daily cross! Something very unpleasant has irritated him; strong emotion or passion is the consequence, and his language uttered in this state, by its exaggerated or resentful character, occasions bitter regret. Some impure and unlawful pleasure or gratification has been presented; he has indulged the propensity, if not in act, in imagination, and afterwards sits down with a burden on his mind! Another is lured by pecuniary advantage, and to obtain it he steps out from the straight path of rectitude! he reflects, and

* Matt. xvi. 24, 25.

† Luke ix. 23.

his conscience is wounded ! But did we daily take up our cross ; determine to deny ourselves and crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts ; we should every day be losing our own life, and find instead, the true life of heaven from the LORD. To a person who has advanced but a little way in the christian life, what we are now recommending may appear a very hard task, a severe discipline, if not an unnecessary one ; and, like the rich young man, he may be disposed to turn away sorrowful, and keep his own possessions.* But the more advanced and confirmed Christian will not only acknowledge the necessity of daily taking up his cross in order to mortify the natural mind, crucify proprium, and lose his own defiled life, but he will do it also, well knowing that in no other way than by thus co-operating with the LORD, can he obtain that true, blessed, and eternal life, which is the object of his renewed ruling love, the ardent and constant desire of his heart. He sees that he has not only a very stubborn, perverse, and evil selfhood to combat with, but that disorder affects almost every circumstance, object, and person he has to do with, and that without the strictest care and precaution he can hardly touch any thing without being defiled ; or come in contact with it without some spark from the infernal world being enkindled anew in the previously dying embers of proprium ; and when we add to this, how much we are infested by infernal spirits, with the numberless ways by which we are by them excited and tempted, we shall be at no loss to understand the force and importance of the eternal truth in calling upon us to take up our daily cross. We may also take into our serious consideration the following circumstances, —that we are passing from death to life ; that we are emerging out of the hells ; separating from our natural connection with infernal spirits ; passing through a very corrupt, ensnaring, and evil world ; have the great work of regeneration to be effected ; and to follow the LORD, in his own way, to an everlasting kingdom of purity and peace. With all these things to accomplish, we have a corrupt, a stubborn, and an opposing proprium to resist, subdue, and crucify. And this being the plain and true state of the case, it is idle for any really sincere christian to regard the present life as a time to gratify and please the natural man ; indulge our natural inclinations to the very limit of propriety ; or cherish our self-love. The very reverse is the truth. It is a time of self-denial, taking up the cross, and losing our

* Matt. xix. 22.

own life, to gain the life eternal. But the thought may be suggested, Is not this too dark and gloomy a representation of the Christian course? Possibly it may appear so to the novice, who has but just entered into the narrow path that leadeth to life; but to those whose faith is confirmed, charity conjoined therewith, and become the ruling living principle of the mind, the representation will not be felt as dark and gloomy, and for this reason, that love is the essential life of man; and, therefore, if this spiritual and heavenly principle of love be our essential life, every thing we have said concerning self-denial and the cross, is in agreement with its aspirations; it is a just description of the only way to have it gratified and perfected; and consequently, the Christian progress will be in the same degree pleasant and happy, as we persevere in the conduct by which it is advanced, and it will be so in spite of all the sorrows of tribulation and temptation of which our LORD forewarned us; it is enough that when He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," He also said, "In me ye shall have peace."* And what is it that makes the true Christian happy? Not the follies, vanities, and transient pleasures of the world; not the gratifications of his senses; his happiness flows down from heaven in proportion to his deliverance from evil and impurity, his advancement into goodness and truth, his approximation toward heaven, his near consociation with angels, his close conjunction with the LORD's divine humanity, as the source and centre of his life and felicity! Very erroneous are the ideas men form of true religion: it is not a melancholy and miserable road; it denies us no rational enjoyment or purified pleasure, but gives to all innocent pleasures a zest which the unregenerate man never felt nor can feel. "All her ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."† And all that the LORD commands or prohibits, is to the end that we may become happier, as He said Himself, "These things have I said unto you that MY joy may abide in you, and that YOUR joy may be full."‡ "These things have I said unto you, that in me ye might have peace."§

This leads me to the second subject of the present Section, **THE FOLLOWING OF JESUS CHRIST.** And here, my brethren, we must take care to distinguish between things which are essentially different. There is a way in which we may follow Jesus, and there is a way in which we cannot follow Him; for

* John xvi. 33.

† John xv. 11.

‡ Prov. iii. 17.

|| John xvi. 33.

He was and is God, as well as man, and in those things which only belong to an infinite Being, we cannot follow Him.—He subdued the hells; we cannot. He sustained such direful temptations as we could not bear.—He fulfilled all righteousness—redeemed the world—and saves the human race who love and serve Him.—He wrought miracles by his own divine power; we cannot. In these things, as well as others, we are not called upon to follow Jesus Christ. What then are we to understand by our following Him? I reply, we must fight the good fight of faith, and overcome the world, as He overcame the world; we must follow his example wherever it is possible; and keep his commandments. This is implied in our LORD's own words, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."† While the LORD requires us to follow Him, He at the same time gives us to understand, for our encouragement, that with his all-sufficient grace it is an easy work, and a light servitude. But alas! how many regard the LORD's service as a burden, because they will not acquire by experience an actual sense of its blessedness! In regard to the example of our LORD, those who seriously desire to follow it, will take delight in contemplating it as it is recorded in the Gospels, to the end that they may clearly understand, and know, what that example is. We know "that He did no evil, neither was guile found in his mouth."‡ How important this example! With what diligence and zeal should we avoid all evil, as sin against Him! And how careful that we suffer no guile, deceit, or duplicity, to tarnish our profession. It was the meat and drink of Jesus Christ, as a man, to do the will of the Father—"the fulness of the godhead" which dwelt bodily in Him—). To imitate Him, it must be our meat and drink to do his will. "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." "Love one another AS I HAVE LOVED YOU."§ With what delight, devotedness, and self-denial, shall we do good, and be useful to all, when we walk as the LORD walked; and love as the LORD loved! When Jesus Christ tell us to take his yoke, learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart, and we shall find rest unto our

* Matt. xi. 29, 30.

† 1st Peter ii. 22.

† John xiv. 21.

§ John xv. 10, 12.

souls, He tells us what we are to shun, what to do, and how to live, that so we may follow Him in the regeneration, until we are prepared and qualified to enter his kingdom and behold his glory. And one grand essential towards this is, that like our adored LORD, we become meek, lowly in heart, humble, and self-abased. "For to this man," saith the LORD, "will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."* And again, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite."† As we enter into, and cultivate, this meek, lowly and humble spirit, the LORD Himself will dwell with us, and in us, and under his divine influence we shall zealously and delightfully imitate his example. And the nearer we come to it, the more blessed and happy shall we be. But this doctrine, unhappily, is better known than practised by professing Christians in general. But give me leave to remind you, my friends of the New Church, not only of the importance of following Jesus Christ and doing his will; but also that we are the very Christians from whom this will more especially be expected, not merely by others, but by the LORD Himself. We must, therefore, be cautious above all others, of indulging the levities of the natural man, of giving into the vain customs and idle vanities of the age, and must guard against the very appearance of evil under all circumstances, and in all places. In rational self-denial, taking up our cross and following Jesus Christ, we are sure to be safe, peaceful, and blessed. Thus shall we promote our own purification and regeneration; set a noble example to the world; recommend the holy doctrines and truths we profess; be useful in life; advance our own heavenly states; honour our adored and beloved LORD, God, and Saviour, as our guide, our ruler, our lawgiver, our life, and our happiness to all eternity! Be assured that HE will well and abundantly reward those who thus deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. May such be our life, and such our end, and to Him be the glory and the praise for ever!

* Isaiah lxvi. 2.

† Isaiah lvii. 15.

SECTION XXI.

TO THE POORER MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

IN all religious societies, of course, there are persons in different situations of life. Some few are rich, learned, and in higher station, others are employed in merchandize, trade, and business; many are working men, and some, it may be, supported by benevolent gratuities.—And as the poorer classes of Christians stand in need of every encouragement to animate them in their way to the kingdom of heaven, I feel disposed to address them especially, and to offer a few words of comfort and advice.

Poor as your situation may be, outwardly, my christian friends, the Divine mercy has visited your humble habitation, and left in your possession gifts which are infinitely more valuable than the whole world, were it your own property. And hereby you will perceive that you are as much the objects of the LORD's favour as your rich neighbour. How must your hearts rejoice when you consider that the eternal God of heaven and earth has blessed you with the peculiar, the astonishing mercies of his second appearing, and that now his own divine Word is opened to your understanding, its spiritual sense made known, and the divine science of correspondences revealed. The writings of our illuminated author are put into your hands, and are the happy medium of leading you to the holy Word, and to the knowledge of the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom. You know the true and only God, our LORD Jesus Christ, as Jehovah in his divine humanity. You are acquainted with the purest principles of christianity; the doctrines, truths, and laws of the sacred Scriptures; the christian life, the sure way to the heavens, are all opened to your view, while the divine truth and love,—the Spirit of your adored LORD, is effecting your regeneration, and guiding your highly-favoured souls to the mansions of eternal bliss! Shall I then call you POOR? You may be so as to the fading things of this world; but you are “rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.” Your treasures are immense, beyond the power of arithmetic to calculate, and they are laid up for you under the care of Omnipotence, and the ever-watchful eye of Infinite wisdom. Many thousands there are as poor as you, in respect to temporal enjoyments, but, at the same time, they have none of those treasures to bless them

which you have received and enjoy, and which you are able to enjoy because you are "poor in spirit;" poor, that is, of and in yourselves, as you very well know; but you have abundance of divine food from Him who said, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." You have also constantly the privilege of putting on the "garments of salvation," the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints. Alas! for the temporally poor who are also spiritually poor; who have no wealth laid up in the internal man for the heavens; and therefore nothing to console them, and bear them up under the troubles and distresses of life; nothing to gild their melancholy setting sun with celestial rays of hope and joy; nothing to enrich their souls with satisfying happiness in the world to come! How different your state! What cause for thankfulness and praise to your all-merciful God and Saviour. He has given you the kingdom; and all things else shall be added unto you of this world's needs, so far as they are proper and suited to your states. I believe that for many reasons the poor man's situation is to be preferred to that of the very rich, for he escapes a thousand snares, excitations, and allurements, to which the rich are more or less exposed. And so judged our LORD Himself when He declared, "How hardly shall they that trust in riches enter the kingdom of heaven." And how difficult to avoid trusting in them, and setting the heart upon them. Indeed, our LORD intimates that the difficulty can only be surmounted by the divine aid, by the help of that God, "with whom all things are possible." The poor man does not labour under the difficulties, disappointments, and troubles which generally fall to the lot of the middling classes in life. Although, my brethren, you have your trials, and sometimes feel the pinching hand of poverty, still when you consider that no situation is exempt from trials, and that if the richer have more temporal accommodations, they have also snares and difficulties in the same proportion, you will then be reconciled to that place in society in which Divine Providence has placed you. You will think your lot, although in the estimation of men it be low and humble, is certainly the best and most proper for you, and therefore you will not only be contented and resigned, but thankful to the LORD, as having placed you in such a situation that your minds are not engaged in, and perplexed with, the thousand follies and customs, cares and difficulties, losses and crosses, which ever attend persons in higher stations of life;

and that having little of this world and its concerns to think about, you are at the greater liberty to employ the mind and thoughts upon those spiritual and eternal subjects which are infinitely superior, and calculated to give you peace, consolation, and joy in this world, and at the same time to increase your treasure and happiness in the world to come. Hence, so far from murmuring, indulging a discontented spirit, or envying the state of others, you will be satisfied in your own state, will bless the LORD for your mercies, and ever bear in mind, that "they who trust in Him shall not want any good." In the eye of the world you may appear of little consequence; but in the eye of the LORD you are as valuable as the greatest and the mightiest. It was He who said, "All souls are mine."* And "There is no respect of persons with God."† With what resignation and submission,—nay, with what thankfulness to the Divine will, may you bear your state in this world, being assured it is the best and most proper for you, and that the Divine Providence and mercy are ever over you, and with you, in your humble dwellings, to give you blessings suited to your situations, and spiritual favours adapted to the wants of your souls!

But, my brethren, we have as yet only considered you in your lowest and least important state. You are not only members of civil society, subjects of an earthly king, and citizens of the world, but you are members of a spiritual society, subjects of a heavenly King, and citizens of the New Jerusalem! Lift up your heads with gladness, and your hearts with joy! You are entered into the LORD's New Church, members of that body, and happy partakers of its superlative blessings. In this relation you belong to a family, and dwell in a house, where you have plenty of provision, and a boundless store of wealth. You may confide in the promise of your Divine master, when he said, "I will abundantly bless her provision, I will satisfy her poor with bread.‡" You may have a continual supply of spiritual food, clothing, and wealth. These are as free for you as for your rich neighbour; yea as for the angels in the heavens. Bear in mind, then, that you are members of a spiritual society, and while you partake of, and rejoice in, the unspeakable blessings you therein receive and enjoy, never forget the duties and uses which are required of you in that spiritual connection, and, for the performance of which, your position in this life affords you the most suitable opportunity. The only way for

* Ezekiel xviii. 4.

† Col. iii. 25.

‡ Psalm cxxii. 15.

you to bear the inconveniences of a low outward state, to be content in adversity, resigned in affliction, and to preserve peace and tranquillity of soul through all the various circumstances of life, is to be faithful and constant in the duties of religion, whether private or public. The service, worship, and ordinances of the LORD's Church are not appointed in vain, nor to be observed, or not observed, at our own pleasure; they are ordained for our good, to advance our spiritual states, promote our regeneration, and as mediums and channels to convey to us spiritual communications, the divine truth and good of the kingdom; and at the same time for us to appear before the Most High, as His dependant family and children, to offer up to Him, from the altar of a sanctified and devout heart, the humble and ardent sacrifices of prayer, thanksgiving, and praise! You, therefore, my brethren, will esteem it your duty and your mercy that you can associate with the LORD's people, receive instruction, be edified and strengthened, and acquire spiritual treasures of knowledge and intelligence, truth and good; grow in the graces and qualities of a spiritual faith and love; experience comfort and peace while here, and also be preparing for that everlasting kingdom where your treasure and your hearts are, and where your happiness will be complete and eternal! You will also recollect that, as members of the LORD's Church, you have certain duties and uses to discharge for the benefit and good of the society to which you belong. Every member of the natural body has its particular use; so every member in the spiritual body has its use. And therefore, whatever may be your situation in the world as to temporal things, you will do well to consider what are the uses you can render to the Church, because these uses are of high importance, and the discharge of them, when done from proper principles and motives, will not only benefit the society, but also advance your own progress in the heavenly life, and thus add to your blessedness in the kingdom above; for that kingdom is a kingdom of uses, and therefore the more we love and perform uses while here, the better shall we be prepared to perform them in heaven, and the greater will be our felicity. From these observations, you, my brethren, whose situation as to this world is poor and low compared with that of others, will I hope consider your state in a proper light, and see that it is of Divine Providence, and the best for you at present. You will see no cause to complain or to envy those in higher stations, but rather be

thankful that you are freed from many snares and allurements which otherwise might essentially hinder your spiritual enjoyments, and your religious progress. You will see that the only true and satisfying happiness is more impartially dispensed than appears at first sight. Contented with your lot, and under the benevolent eye of Divine Providence, you will turn your minds and thoughts to superior objects, and rejoice with joy unspeakable that you are favoured with the blessings and mercies of the New dispensation, the LORD's Second Advent, and his New and everlasting Kingdom! As the sincere members of his Church, the LORD will bless you, support you, and make your spirits happy in every state, and in all the vicissitudes of life till you come to lay your languid heads upon the dying pillow, and then, in those serious and important moments, you will feel of how little consequence it has been whether you were rich or poor, lived in a palace or a cottage. The angels of heaven will then surround your bed, and whisper sweet consolation to your departing souls! And when you have entered the world of spirits, it will not be asked, "Were you, temporally, a rich man, or a poor one?" for not any of these fading distinctions are known there. Nothing will there appear of any account but your having been a true disciple of the LORD on earth; possessing a truly penitent, humble, regenerate mind; having improved Divine mercies, shunned evils, walked uprightly; and, in faith and love, obeyed the Divine Word and will of the LORD. Then all your inconveniences and troubles will be over. Angels will conduct you to the gates of the New heavens, which will open for your admission. You will enter in, meet the divine approbation of Jesus Christ, your righteous judge and all-merciful LORD, receive the reward of his mercy, and enjoy, with all the blessed spirits above, the full felicity, delight, and happiness of the heavens for ever! Be ye, therefore, faithful unto death, and you shall receive the crown of everlasting life!

SECTION XXII.

TIME AND TALENTS,—THEIR IMPROVEMENT AND APPLICATION.

WE are instructed from the LORD, by means of the enlightened SWEDENBORG, that no angels were created such, but that every angel and happy spirit in the eternal world, as well as the unhappy beings there, was previously a man on this, or some other earth. This information leads us to the consideration of another subject which is of infinite importance to our becoming angels or happy spirits there. We perceive that rational and immortal beings must be created in this lower world; and, in order that they may become angels eventually, that they must be endowed with rationality and liberty, with understanding and will, by which to receive the divine wisdom and love, and so become images and likenesses of their Creator, and thus fitted to live for ever in conjunction of life with Him, in his heavenly kingdom. But it is also evident that man has perverted these noble and essential constituents of his nature, whereby his will has become altogether depraved, his understanding immersed in darkness; and the whole man perverted into a state of infernal disorder, misery, and death. Nevertheless, it has pleased the all-merciful Jehovah, our Creator, to redeem us from this awful state, give us power to rise out of it, and again to open the heavens to our souls, that we may become the recipients of his love and wisdom, have conjunction of life with Him, and live for ever happy in heaven. But, my brethren, when we consider that these great and infinitely important results depend upon the use we make of our short span of life in this world, of what astonishing consequence does time appear! Surely this single thought is sufficient to set aside and banish from our regard the follies, vanities, empty enjoyments, and trifling amusements, which we so often permit to rob us of, and take away a considerable part of that precious time, upon every moment of which eternal consequences depend! For our enlightened author informs us that eternal consequences do really depend upon every moment of our existence here; and if so, we cannot but know that these consequences are either bad or good; they either exalt or depress, forward or retard, our religious progress. I am not here suggesting any thing against a reasonable indulgence in rational and innocent gratifications, because what is reasonable and innocent must be orderly, and what is orderly

cannot be in itself wrong or evil. But when the importance of time, and the great work we have to do on earth, are seriously considered, we shall be very guarded and cautious that we do not waste, misemploy, or abuse that time, the proper use of which has so very important a bearing upon our future state. It is certainly of Divine Providence that none of us know how long, or how short, our stay will be in this world, and this uncertainty should dispose us well to improve it, and make the best use of it, in compliance with our LORD's words, where he said, "Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not at what hour your LORD doth come."* "Be ye also ready, for at such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." These words plainly teach us two important lessons: the first is, That we so watch as ever to guard against doing any thing in time which shall cause regret in eternity; and also watch against every thing and circumstance in time that may have a tendency to render our states and our uses less exalted in eternity. We well know that our spiritual enemies are very watchful to embrace every opportunity to do us a spiritual injury; and if we do not watch also, they will take advantage when we are off our guard, and lead us into somewhat we shall have to regret afterwards. Hence, too, our gracious LORD calls upon us both "to watch and to pray, that we enter not into temptation."† Now, my brethren, we are not called to this great duty in vain; there is a real necessity for us to watch and to pray; and if we disregard it, we shall certainly suffer eternal loss. The second lesson we learn from the LORD's saying, "Be ye also ready, for at such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh," is this:—While we are here, in a state of preparation for heaven, we are putting on the wedding garment for the divine marriage; we are making up our life for eternity. These are matters for solemn consideration, being of unspeakable consequence! To be ready, is to be daily preparing by putting off, and casting away, whatever belongs to or adheres to us that cannot enter where the angels dwell; and by constantly putting on those divine truths and goods, graces and qualities, which go to make up the wedding garment in which we are to appear before the heavenly Bridegroom. And if we are rightly and wisely making up our life, we must be appropriating the divine love and wisdom, elevating the will and understanding into the light and heat of heaven's Eternal Sun, raising our affections into the

* Matt. xxiv. 42, 44.

† Matt. xxvi. 41.

purities of the kingdom, and accumulating the divine oil of heavenly love, that our intellectual lamps may be trimmed, bright burning, and our souls prepared, our wedding garments on, and our lives made up for heaven, and we ready to enter into the celestial marriage, to unite with angels and be happy for ever! Here, then, we may perceive what a great and important work we have to do, and how short the time we have to do it in. And if we did but properly reflect on the shortness and uncertainty of time; the work we have to do, and the eternal consequences arising from faithfully doing it; we should be more diligent than we are in improving the time we have yet left; it would be our constant, our delightful employment to prepare for eternity, and stand ready when called; to exchange short and uncertain time for a certain and never-ending eternity of beatitude and glory. From what I have now said, I hope my brethren will not suppose that I wish them to be secluded from society, to neglect the concerns of the world, or deprive themselves of those comforts which are necessary to our present state of existence. I have no wish to see amongst us the Pharisaic practice of some professors, who are constantly running after religious services to the neglect of their families, their business, and the substantial uses of life. True religion does not require this of any one. It is a mere external habit which has become pleasing to the natural mind for the excitement it causes; and may rather be called a religious amusement, than a religious duty, or spiritual devotion.

Besides our time, we have other important gifts to improve, the proper improvement of which will be to our present and everlasting advantage.

We have certain talents given us by our LORD and Master, and the vast importance of making a proper use of them He has taught us in a divine parable. To one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one.* Now it is very evident that we all have some talent or talents to use and improve. To enumerate them would be almost impracticable, they are so multifarious and so different in kind. Every Christian should know, and be best acquainted with, his own particular talent. Whatever it may be, it is given him for use, and that use not for himself only, but for others. It does not require many arguments to prevail upon men in general to employ their talents for their own temporal benefit; but to employ both natural and

* Matt. xxv. 14.

spiritual talents for the good of others, as the LORD God requires of us, is an application of them not so agreeable to the proprium, and therefore not attended to with quite so much diligence and ardour. Through the divine mercy of the LORD, we have, in the New Church, some professors of the doctrines of strong intellect, superior abilities, and spiritual talents, and if our brethren in general would reflect what great and extensive uses may be produced by the faithful exercise of such talents, they would, no doubt, be induced to improve their own particular ones, in promoting similar uses, according to the quality of the talents they possess. There are talents for speaking and preaching; and there are talents for writing; both which have contributed, and do contribute, to the advancement of the LORD's cause; witness the numbers that have been brought into the New Church by the labour of ministers, and the numbers who have received the doctrines through the various publications of qualified persons. How many excellent and useful New Church works have already gone forth into the world, the good and use arising from which must be incalculable. Add to these the communications written, and still writing, for our periodical publications. How easy is it to see the use and benefit of talents being thus employed. And what have they been employed for? What are they still employed for? Not with selfish views; not for temporal profit or human applause! For what then? Why for spiritual good, the benefit of men, to promote their eternal interest; and to honour as well as obey that blessed LORD and Master, who has conferred these talents upon them, and commanded the improvement and use of them. Permit me, then, my talented friends, to say to you, "Be not weary in well doing, for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not."* Besides these talents, "there are diversities of gifts;"† there are talents for conversation, talents for edifying others, talents for external uses in the Church, and many others. And these are not confined to men of learning, superior intellect, or distinguished abilities. Every member has some talent or other to improve, and every one should consider and find out what that is, and then use it and improve it, for the good of the body, and the benefit of his fellow-beings; for be our talents what they may, and whether we have five, or two, or one, they are given to us by our Divine Master and LORD, and he expects us to make that use of them which he has commanded. The man

* Gal. vi. 9.

† 1 Cor. vi. 11.

who had but one talent, was not condemned because he had no more given him, but because he had not improved it, but digged in the earth and buried it there. He stands as a type of all those who receive the divine gift of truth without any intention of making a good use of it ; who receive it, therefore, in their understanding only, whence (for want of being applied to the life, and thus united with good in the will) it sinks down into the natural memory and becomes buried there amongst things earthly and vile.

Some have talents of a lower nature than those already mentioned; and these, no doubt, are bestowed to be used and improved. Such are temporal talents, or those which more particularly belong to this life. These are very useful, very necessary, and when rightly employed, very much contribute to the benefit and success of the blessed cause we are engaged in. Nay, so much is the one connected with the other, that the Church cannot prosper without the aid of such talents. It is as much the duty of the affluent, and those who are prosperous in life, to exercise these talents rightly, as for those who are more spiritually and intellectually affluent to exercise theirs. How can the Church, as to its societies and their external worship, exist and continue without pecuniary aid? Consequently, such of our brethren as are entrusted with the proper administration of temporal property (for that is the true and Christian idea of possessing property) are under peculiar obligations to dispose of it in a liberal and prudent manner, *in proportion to their means*, for the support of the Church to which they belong, and the comfort of the minister. Some wealthy persons may not have great spiritual talents to employ, but Providence having given them temporal means, they are stewards of this property, and must give an account how they have disposed of it, when they appear at the judgment seat of the Great Proprietor of all properties. "The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof." Whenever I see a man in affluent circumstances, who is a member of the LORD's New Church, and find him to be of a covetous disposition, unwilling to bestow a reasonable share of his property to assist the blessed cause, he puts me in mind of the rich man who wanted to pull down his barns and build greater, but that very night his soul was required of him. To caution us against this worst of evils, covetousness, the Lord added, "so is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." And just before this our Divine Saviour said, "Take heed and

beware of covetousness.”* As much as to say, this is a most sordid, earthly, and vile disposition. Dread it, as you would the fangs of a hungry tiger, for it is calculated to devour every good principle, and to plunge your souls into one of the deepest hells, where a drop of water cannot be obtained to cool your burning thirst. Brethren, beware of covetousness ! Remember what our author says, that those who are lovers of money for its own sake, are more deeply in the love of self than others ; and, in another place, that self-love is a corporeal love, but the love of money is a material love. Be free, be generous, be wisely liberal ; and, in this case, “make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”† This, I know, is not a very pleasant subject to some people, but I must testify that the very essential principle of the Church, and of true Christianity, is in direct opposition to covetousness. We may not be wholly under the power of this evil, yet we may, if not very careful, suffer it on some occasions to have too much influence over us, and thus, almost insensibly, to grow upon us ; and hence it has come to pass that a pretty general impression prevails, that the best and most effectual supporters of our Church expenses, are not generally its wealthiest members. However, every member of the Church in good circumstances will do well to bear in mind, that this is a talent which his LORD has favoured him with, and that it is both his duty and his interest to make use of it in a liberal and prudent manner, for the prosperity of the Church and the benefit of his neighbour. And if he is a wise man, he will take the Divine wisdom for his counsellor, and never forget the LORD’s warning of the deceitfulness of riches, and the spiritual danger of being deceived by them to eternal ruin ! I will only add the expression of a hope that it will be our care, as spiritual Christians, both to recollect the principles which are to govern every part of our conduct, and the particular talents with which Jesus Christ has blessed and intrusted us, to be dispensed under the influence of those principles. And whatever those talents are, let us faithfully and conscientiously, willingly and cheerfully, use and improve them, to the good of the Church, the benefit of our fellow-Christians, and the honour of our most bountiful LORD, who will assuredly repay us a hundred-fold in this life, and still more in the life to come.

* Luke xli. 15 to 21.

† Luke xlii. 1.

SECTION XXIII.

ON SPIRITUAL MEANS AND MERCIES, AND THEIR RIGHT APPLICATION.

BESIDES Time and Talents given to us by the LORD to improve, to the end that we may become blessed and enriched to all eternity, we have also certain spiritual means of improvement bestowed upon us for the like important and eternal purposes. And what are the grand objects which, as New Churchmen, we should have continually in view, but to improve our understanding, and elevate our affections, into the divine truth and good of the heavenly kingdom, and thus to advance in the regenerate life, that we may be the happy subjects of that kingdom for ever? But can we accomplish these objects without possessing and using the appointed means to obtain them? Certainly not. We have those means in abundance, but it is through want of diligence in using them, that we make no greater advances in the heavenly life.

The illuminated writings of our heaven-taught Author are an essential means put into our hands at this day, for the most important eternal purposes. But, alas! how many of our friends neglect to read them with sufficient frequency and attention! Business, want of time, and such like excuses are made, and are deemed justifiable ones, but the real cause, I fear, is want of inclination. "WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY," and nothing can be more true, and no common truth more useful, than this old and universally esteemed proverb. There are persons, and serious persons too, who have little or no inclination for reading; it is rather an unpleasant task, than a pleasing employment; and hence the writings of the New Church, as well as other works, are neglected. But it is in this case, as it is in many others. We must FORCE our natural inclinations to comply with our spiritual good, by listening to the demands of reason and conscience; and did a proper zeal to promote that good operate upon the mind, we should compel ourselves to do that which at first might be a little unpleasant, but soon would become most delightful. Rational self-compulsion is the origin of every good habit and attainment. Nothing morally good is obtained without it. Did we consider the immense advantages to be derived from the knowledge and intelligence of spiritual

and divine things, we should dread the thought of being inattentive to those means by which such inestimable advantages may be acquired! I have known professors of our heavenly doctrines who have had the writings of our Author in their book-case, neatly bound, and taken great care of as a valuable acquisition for a number of years, and in all that time not so many pages have been read! And this, indeed, is but too much like thousands more who have the Word of divine revelation laid up on a shelf, but never take it down to see what it contains. Whereas, if we desire to become savingly acquainted with that blessed Word, to understand its contents, enter into its spiritual subjects, and know the things that belong to our peace, we must read and study these writings to enable us to open its interior spiritual sense by means of the divine science of correspondences,—to understand the true nature of the LORD's Second Advent,—and to bring to our delighted view the doctrines, truths, principles, life, and felicities of his own eternal kingdom. It may be questioned whether there is any state or situation of life in which the recipients of the doctrines might not find some time to read, study, and meditate upon the Holy Word, and the writings of the New Church, for their edification and spiritual improvement. If, my brethren, you will properly consider your true interest, you will see the importance of improving your intellectual powers, and will then read and study, at all convenient opportunities, those inestimable writings in which all true, useful, and delightful spiritual knowledge is to be found. And what can be a more powerful motive to do so, than the recollection, that the greater amount of spiritual and heavenly science and knowledge you obtain, when combined with a corresponding life, the more receptive you will become of higher degrees of love, good, use, tranquillity, and peace? Considering, therefore, that such science and knowledge are sought after by the good for the sake of the good and purity to which they lead, I must own, that I frequently wonder how it is that some very serious and orderly minds among us, are not more assiduous to gain knowledge and improve their understanding. They put me in mind of Old Church professors with whom I have conversed upon this subject, whose reply is, "O I know enough to get me to heaven, if I do but practice it," which is as much as to say, "I care not about any thing else, so that I can but just get ~~into~~ heaven among the rest." What a selfish principle! This is not the

principle of a New Church Christian. He desires to improve his faculties, his talents, and his mercies, that he may become wiser and better, and be more useful as well as happy in the heavens. Be it our care, then, to make use of the means while we have them, and read, study, meditate, and so rise higher and higher into the light of the Eternal Sun; and not be content with the twilight or evening shades, while we may enter into the bright beams of a celestial day. The question with every one should be, not whether he shall get into heaven merely, or not get in; but he should ask himself the question, "What ought I to do, as a rational and immortal being, to improve my spiritual state, approximate nearer to the angels, and obtain a closer conjunction with the LORD Jesus Christ, my life, and my happiness for ever?" And, therefore, as the holy Word and the writings are the divine means given us for these infinitely important purposes, let us not slight the gift; injure our own states; circumscribe our uses; and lessen our own felicity in heaven, by neglecting such inestimable means of spiritual improvement; but rather let us read them with diligence, study them with humility as well as earnestness, meditate upon their contents with affection and a teachable spirit, and prove by the good use we make of it that we value the gift, and adore the Giver!

Every spiritual Christian of the New Church will bear in mind that PRAYER is another essential means of improvement; and of enlarging the reception of divine mercies; and I have my fears lest by some this important duty should not be so religiously regarded as it deserves. On the subject of prayer, I shall, in the first place, offer a few observations upon the duty itself, and the manner in which it is commonly practised. As to the duty itself. It certainly is one of the most spiritual and sacred we can be engaged in; because it is no less than an immediate address and application to the infinitely holy and all-knowing God our Saviour; and therefore it does not depend so much upon words, or time, or place, as upon the state and disposition of the heart; but still there are times and seasons, as well as states, in which this sacred duty may be solemnly, and profitably performed. The custom which prevails at this day with religious professors of other denominations in relation to prayer, cannot, I conceive, be regarded as very consistent, or usefully be followed in the New Church. How common it is with them not only to "make long prayers and

use vain repetitions," but also to pray for half an hour or more, three or four times in a day; while at their religious meetings six or seven, or perhaps eight or ten persons, are frequently engaged one after another in what they call prayer! Even young professors and mere novices are called upon thus to pray among their brethren. They must say something, however incoherent and trifling; and what they say not unfrequently meets with a sort of comic criticism in private, not much unlike that of a dramatic entertainment. But if, perchance, some of them can use many words, and speak with freedom for a length of time, they are then supposed to have the gift of prayer, and are called gifted brethren. CAN THIS BE PRAYER? THE PRAYER OF SCRIPTURE? I mention not these things from any desire to expose the failings of serious minds. They may think they are doing what is right and profitable, and conceive they derive great benefit by the practice; but I wish, my brethren, to discriminate between real spiritual prayer, and that which is not so. Where there are families, children, and servants, no doubt it is very desirable that the master or parent should open or close the day with them (or both) with the LORD's prayer, introduced with a few extempore petitions and reading from the Word. It is also commendable to put into the hands of children, in addition to teaching them to repeat the LORD's prayer by heart, short appropriate forms for them to use night and morning; thus training them up to reverence the Divine Being, and inducing upon them a habit of devotion, that cannot but be useful to them in after life. But, after all, true prayer, viewed in itself, is something more internal, spiritual, and, I may say, divine, than any outward formulary or verbal expressions. Our blessed LORD, when in our nature below, frequently prayed, but rarely, if ever, with his disciples. It is said, "In the morning a great while before day, Jesus went out and departed into a solitary place and prayed"*—"and He withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed."† Our Author tells us, that "Prayer, considered in itself, is discourse with God, so that there is an opening of man's internals towards God, with somewhat resembling revelation from the LORD."‡ And he further observes, "They who are in the LORD, and the LORD in them, whatsoever they will and ask they obtain, because they will and ask from the LORD."§ Hence it will appear that true

* Mark i. 35.

† Arcanu Caelertia, 2535.

‡ Luke v. 16; see also Matt. xxvi. 39.

§ Apocalypse Revealed, 951.

prayer is the ardent desire or devout aspiration of the soul, which first descends from the LORD, and then returns to Him; consequently prayer which is thus indited or inspired from the LORD, will, and must, be answered. This only I conceive to be true, spiritual prayer. Such prayer as this does not require a multitude of words; a very few words, or only a single but ardent aspiration of the heart, will constitute such a prayer. Moreover, it may be said of a truly regenerate mind, that it is always in prayer, because the ruling love, and the continual desire of the heart, are ever towards the LORD. Such a person, therefore, is constantly living and acting from this heavenly principle of love and desire, wherever he may be, at home or abroad, in public or in private, in business or various engagements, and therefore he is still essentially engaged in Prayer; for his heart, his life, his soul, is directed to his God, that his will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Thus he is in harmony with the LORD's words, "Men ought ALWAYS TO PRAY."* And this also must have been the state our LORD meant when He said, "Watch ye, therefore, and PRAY ALWAYS, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man."† For, as our Author observes further, "The LORD wills that man should first ask and will; and the LORD afterwards answers and gives; that it may be appropriated to the man."‡ How important then it is, my brethren, that we properly understand what true prayer is! We shall then avoid those unreasonably long prayers and vain repetitions, with a multiplicity of unseasonable times, and unnecessary and unprofitable effusions, which are so common in this age, and which are accounted essential to the Christian character and life, all which, no doubt, originates in mistaken ideas of the Divine Nature, and of the human mind, and of the really loving and ever merciful disposition of God towards man. Nevertheless it is highly expedient that we do, at proper times, and in suitable states, seriously and solemnly address the LORD in prayer. But these seasons are more or less frequent according to the spiritual state and disposition of the soul! If we neglect this, we do ourselves more injury than we can repair in any other way, and sustain eternal loss. It is unnecessary for me to say, that in order to our prayers being acceptable to the LORD, and profitable in a full measure to ourselves, we must be careful to address the true and only Jehovah God. Some re-

* Luke xviii. 1.

† Luke xxi. 36.

‡ *Apocalypse Revealed*, 376.

ceivers of the doctrines seem for a long time to have a difficulty in laying aside altogether the old form they have been used to of praying to the Father for the sake of the Son, but they should resolutely address the LORD Jesus only, knowing that "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and that He hath "all power in heaven and in earth." There is a passage in the illuminated writings of our Author, which every member of the New Church should particularly notice. He says, "The prayers of every man who lives in a christian country, and does not believe on the LORD, are henceforth not attended to, but are in heaven like ill-scented odours, or like eruptions from corrupted lungs, which prayer in its ascent to the angelic heaven is but like the smoke of a chimney, which by the violence of the wind is driven down into the eyes of men. This is the case from henceforth with all worship which is directed towards a trinity of distinct persons, and not towards a Trinity conjoined in One Person."*

Thus are we taught from the infallible and eternal truth of the holy Word, that we have but one God to pray to, worship, and serve. That God is the LORD Jesus Christ, in whose Divine-human Person the whole Trinity centres. To HIM, and to HIM ALONE we address our prayers. To understand what true prayer is, we must live in the spirit of prayer; and then we shall not neglect our solemn addresses to the divine Majesty at all expedient times, and in suitable spiritual states. If when we truly pray to Jesus Christ our God, our prayers are both heard and answered, as they assuredly will be, who can describe the blessed and eternal advantages we receive through this most important and essential means of improvement with which we are favoured by our all-merciful Father! He has distinctly said, "Ask and ye shall receive," and he is faithful to perform that which he has promised.

I shall next submit to your consideration another means of spiritual improvement, and one productive of two-fold benefit; that is, to ourselves and to our brethren at the same time, and I am inclined to think this is not quite so much taken advantage of as it might be. I allude to free, frequent, and spiritual conversation. It would be well and very profitable if members who have the opportunity, would meet, as often as convenient,

* *Universal Theology*, n. 108. It is not to be understood from this passage, that the salvation of those who sincerely offer such prayers, is at all endangered thereby; although their religious progress and happiness may be diminished.

to converse in a friendly manner upon spiritual subjects, for mutual edification and improvement. It is said by divine inspiration, "They that feared the LORD, spake often one to another, and the LORD hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his Name. And they shall be mine saith the LORD of Hosts."* At this day we can have no free conversation upon religious subjects with persons of other persuasions because, not being united with them in doctrine, sentiment, and faith, every one's hand is against ours. And since social intercourse is one of the means of improvement, both intellectual and practical, which is deeply rooted in human nature, it is the more necessary for us to cultivate it among ourselves, in order to inform, strengthen, and confirm each other's minds, and to assist each other to advance farther into the light and intelligence of divine truth. Hereby the more wise and intelligent will edify those who are less so; and a closer union, and stronger affection in each to each, will thereby be promoted. Great good will result from free and spiritual conversation one with another. Every one of us, I presume, must have experienced this. And it is commendable to use every means to advance our spiritual states, and forward our regeneration. I have observed that it has been frequent for a few to meet at a friend's house on a Sunday, either to dine or drink tea. This is well, and a good opportunity for spiritual converse: but on such occasions how commonly it has been the case, that the time has been spent in trifling, unedifying, and worldly conversation,—mere chit-chat,—whereas, had it been passed in conversing on spiritual and divine subjects, every one would have been improved and benefited; and not only a temporal and bodily, but a spiritual and soul satisfying repast would have been enjoyed in innocent and happy combination. This error is owing to the want of having the affections alive and directed the right way. The natural man too much prevails. Infernals are active to stimulate it; and the attendant angels are driven to a distance! It certainly would be more consistent with our character as Christians, to avail ourselves of these and all other opportunities, to converse and improve our minds upon subjects of such infinite importance to our eternal state; for by this means we should not only increase our own knowledge, but be the better qualified to converse with opposers; recom-

* Malachi iii. 16.

mend the truth; and defend our doctrines by refuting the arguments brought against them. At the same time, such religious conversation enlivens the mind, animates the affections, and encourages our progress through the regeneration to the kingdom above. In short, there are no means put into our hands by our all-merciful Father, but what are designed to be of essential and everlasting benefit to our souls; and be they what they may, it is our duty, and will be our certain interest, to make use of them for our own good, the good of others, and to the glory of Jesus Christ, whose professed servants and disciples we are. What is wanted seems to be, that some spiritually-minded master-spirit should take the lead and direct the conversation into useful channels, and keep it there by gentle and imperceptible management. One thing is certain, we can have no want of useful and interesting subjects. We have not only the incomparable writings of our enlightened Author, which are the great means in the LORD's hand, of opening to us the wonderful subjects of the LORD's first and second Advent; the nature of the eternal world; the soul of man; the true resurrection; and a number of others equally important. But we are also favoured with the knowledge of the holy Word in its internal and spiritual meaning, by which we are led out of all error and darkness, as well as evil and impurity, to see our way clear through the world, to the kingdom of rest and peace. And when we assemble on such occasions, we know that now a superior influx descends from heaven into the soul of man. Angels are more closely associated with us. The divine Presence among us is granted in greater fulness, and the LORD Jehovah Jesus Himself delights to dwell in the midst of our spirits, as the habitation of his love, wisdom, and life! Is it possible for us to contemplate these mercies, these wonders of Infinite goodness and condescension, without seeing and feeling what a state of privilege and blessing we enjoy; or without desiring to confer with our brethren thereon until our hearts burn within us?

Such and so great are our spiritual means and mercies! And shall we not improve them with the utmost diligence, zeal, and delight?—O! let us not neglect them, but take every opportunity to read and study, learn and digest those writings which are so well calculated to elevate us into the light and love of angels! How do they lead us to, and endear the Word of eternal truth and love to our souls! With what pleasure must we

peruse their sacred contents, while every part of them tends to enlighten the understanding into what concerns our eternal felicity, while it sheds a guiding light upon every subject which can delight or adorn the intellectual faculty; and there is not a sentence but what is calculated to elevate our affections to our adorable LORD, and to bring down heaven, with its nameless beatitudes, into our internal man. And what an unspeakable mercy to have the angels of light and love nearly and intimately associated with us, our guardians and assistants in our way to their own kingdom! yea, to enjoy with them the divine influx and presence of Jesus Christ, and to know that he dwells in the good and truth we receive from Him, as in his own temple, communicating thence his own happiness and joy to our souls for ever! Why, my brethren, if we do not see our mercies, we must be blind indeed. If we do not feel the most sincere gratitude and thankfulness for them, we must have hearts of stone. If we do not delight in them and zealously improve them, we are our own worst and eternal enemies! Let us remember and constantly bear them in mind, and cherish the feeling of the peculiar obligations we are under to appear in the world, in respect to our external conduct, and every part of it, as the most upright, exemplary, and orderly Christians. May every New Church man adopt the words of the prophet where he says, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. That so the Gentiles may see our righteousness, and all kings our glory, being called by the New Name which the mouth of the LORD shall name. And that we may be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God."*

SECTION XXIV.

THE PURSUIT OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE, AND THE PROPER MOTIVE THEREIN.

SINCE true religion is essential to the true happiness of man, every degree of accurate and sound knowledge concerning re-

* Isa. lxii. 1, 2, 3.

ligion, must be calculated to effect a real and important use. And as the essence of true religion is spiritual and divine, so those sciences and knowledges which are of a spiritual nature, must deserve the best and most serious attention of rational and immortal beings. Hence we esteem and admire those elevated minds who have obtained a superior knowledge of divine subjects, are acquainted with spiritual and moral scientifics, and are capable of conversing upon, and explaining them, for the use and improvement of others. Under the New dispensation of superior light and love, we have a great variety of sublime, spiritual, and divine subjects presented to the intellectual view of man. Whatever truths are now opened, whether they be literal or spiritual, internal or external, they are given to us to know, to receive, to use, and enjoy, so far as our natural and rational powers extend; and we cannot be sufficiently thankful to our God and Saviour for these wonderful discoveries, which are designed to advance us into high and holy states of love and wisdom, goodness and purity, such as distinguish the glorified angels in the New heavens! But here let me warn my brethren, that although exalted and happy effects may arise from the possession of extensive religious and spiritual knowledge, the most dangerous consequences may result from the abuse of that knowledge. On our first acquaintance with, and reception of the extraordinary mercies of the New dispensation, we are usually very anxious and assiduous to acquire knowledge; to be acquainted with the wonderful arcana of the Word and the writings: we read, we hear, we converse, and take every opportunity to become more extensively and better informed, all which, in itself, is very good and laudable. But then we are to recollect, there are two different states in which these zealous inquirers may stand; and two different causes or motives for their thirst for information. These states, and these causes, should be well understood, and properly discriminated. In the one, there is much spiritual danger; in the other, much spiritual advantage. Some, it is to be feared, seek to enter into an acquaintance with these divine things and subjects in a merely natural and unreformed state, under the influence of their own natural and impure lives. Now these persons, from a natural love of knowledge, and excited by the wonderful discoveries announced under the New dispensation, may very assiduously apply their minds, and take every opportunity to learn and understand what is contained in our luminous writings. The

novelty of the subjects, the uncommon events, and the exalted circumstances they describe, take hold of their natural affections, and arouse their natural curiosity, and so gain an ascendancy; their chief incitement, however, being like that of the Athenians of old, to learn some new thing. And these characters possibly may become as highly graduated in the external knowledge of these subjects, and may converse as freely and fluently upon them, as any other persons; they may make a zealous profession of them, and study, read, and talk about them, even to their dying day. But here is their awful danger; all this knowledge, zeal, profession, and talk, is only in the head, or is connected only with the impure affections of the natural man: it leads to no change in the heart and the life; the knowledge they have acquired is mixed with and defiled by their depraved loves and practically false principles. They have known their LORD's will, but have not done it; and therefore must be "beaten with many stripes."* From them will be taken the talents they have not improved; and it will be said concerning them, "These, my enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."† So dangerous are the consequences of knowing and professing these high and holy subjects in a merely natural state, from a mere desire of knowing, while the will is averse to doing, the truth; the heart and life is unchanged; and the man is just the same as he was before! It behoves every recipient of our heavenly doctrines carefully to determine for himself, by serious self-examination, in what state of reception he really stands, or what is the quality of it in the LORD's sight.

To be good, and do good, from the LORD, is the only way to be happy; and oh, that every one earnestly desired to stand in no lower or other state than this! Doubtless there are very many, and it is to be hoped the great majority of inquirers are such, who enter into an examination of the writings, the internal sense of the holy Word, and the peculiar subjects of the New dispensation, in a spiritual state, or at least in a penitent, reformed, and religious state of mind. These persons we may reasonably suppose will be equally assiduous and diligent to obtain information and knowledge. They will read, study, converse, and make use of proper opportunities and means to improve their intellectual faculties, in the knowledge of these most interesting and divine subjects. But, nevertheless, there

* Luke xii. 47.

† Luke xix. 27

are two different motives which may operate even with such persons—the one, unprofitable and therefore dangerous—the other, very profitable and therefore safe. In the first place, the religious character may devote his time and his powers to obtain a knowledge of the deep spiritual subjects, the wonderful arcana, the doctrines and truths of the New Church, and the animating information communicated concerning the spiritual world, heaven and hell, and the states of men there: this he may do with much zeal and delight, while, at the same time, he gradually raises his understanding to a superior degree of intelligence. But is it not possible for such a person to be too much lifted up, too much carried away with the mere knowledge of these important subjects? Is it not possible that his knowledge of them may do him much hurt, by ministering to his self-derived intelligence, and spiritual pride?

The mere love of knowing exalted and divine subjects may be so ardent as chiefly, if not wholly, to engage the mind, so that the pursuit of, and the advancement in these spiritual sciences may be the principal object in view. The consequence may be, that while the intellect is abundantly stored and highly enriched with the knowledge of spiritual and divine subjects, the love of growing wise, or more properly, the love of becoming intelligent will supersede the love of growing good. An attention to science will so engross the affections, that a regard to purity shall have but little share in them. The mind will be so lifted up into the regions of light, as not willingly to descend into the valley of humiliation and self-abasement. Superior in knowledge, it is easy for such to conceive themselves superior in virtue. When we stand high in the opinion of men for wisdom, it is no difficult matter for us to stand high in our own opinion for excellence of character. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth (or buildeth up)."* And we know it is possible for the understanding to be elevated into the light of heaven, while the will at the same time remains enchained in the kingdom of darkness and evil! When, therefore, the mind is occupied in the pursuit of science from the mere love of knowing, although divine truth be the object of that knowledge, there is then much danger, because science or knowledge alone, however extensive and exalted, cannot be effectual for our salvation and happiness, any more than faith alone, or truth alone; Neither the one nor the other has any power or life, unless

* Cor. viii. 1.

united with a superior principle, even that of spiritual and heavenly love, or the love of that to which the knowledge of truth should ever lead us, namely, the divine good. Hence it appears that we may ardently thirst after the knowledge of the truth, and feel so strong an affection for it as to be constantly engaged in its pursuit, and so may acquire an abundant store of truths in the understanding, and yet be destitute of even a single ray of that true wisdom, which ever tends to right action, and chiefly delights in the uses of spiritual and moral life. And thus from the strong affection for spiritual knowledge, a person may go on gathering more and more, till he is called away into the world of spirits, without having done that work, or perhaps any part of it, which his knowledge of divine truth should, in the very first place, have led him to do. So dangerous is an ardent thirst for spiritual knowledge, when not united with an equal hunger for spiritual and eternal good. Only blessed are they "that hunger and thirst after righteousness." Hence our LORD informs us, concerning such characters as those I have deprecated, that on their arrival in the world of spirits, all their attainments in science and knowledge of spiritual and divine things shall be taken from them, that is, all such truths as had not been properly improved, applied to the heart and life, and therefore not united with their corresponding good. This is signified in our LORD's words, where he speaks thus:—"For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him."* We cannot, then, but see the imminent danger of entering into divine subjects, by acquainting ourselves with the doctrines and truths, the arcana and wonderful discoveries of the New Church, from improper motives, and to the advancement of an improper end. When our motive is the mere love of knowing, and our end a superior elevation into spiritual science and intelligence for self-gratification, we may exalt the understanding into the light of heaven, while the will may be entirely unrenewed, the life inwardly unreformed, and so the man, even while he lives a moral life from a regard to his own respectability, only rises the higher to sustain the deeper fall, and eventually to sink into spiritual ignorance, insanity, and woe.

Let me now add a few observations upon the proper and legitimate pursuit of spiritual knowledge. When we consider the purposes which the subjects, doctrines, and truths of the

LORD's holy Word, his Church and Kingdom, are designed to accomplish, we cannot be at much loss to know in what state, from what motive, and to what end, we should acquaint ourselves with them. They are all spiritual, divine, and eternal. They originate in, and proceed from, the LORD Jesus Christ our God. They are given in pure love and mercy to man ; and they are designed to enlighten, to save, to regenerate, and bring man back to the true centre of his happiness, and finally establish him in the presence and kingdom of the Lord. Hence it will appear that we are to seek after spiritual knowledge with a sincere and humble mind, desiring to know the divine will that we may do it, and thus become wise unto salvation. When we seek after truth in this humble and sincere manner, the truth we acquire will actually enlighten the mind, because it will be accompanied with the divine influx of the life of truth, and really desiring to receive the benefit of divine truth, we shall not only firmly believe in it, and in the LORD its author, and cordially profess it ; but we shall, in proportion as we know it, apply it to the life, by rejecting the evils and errors it enables us to discover in ourselves, and by obeying its holy and purifying laws. Hence, as knowledge is thus received and truth thus applied, they become united with their own proper and corresponding good, and are living, operative, saving truths to the soul. They enter into the affections as well as the understanding ; a new will, a new love is then given to man from the LORD, and he becomes a new man. Such a New Church Christian as this will thirst for knowledge, and seek an advancement into the perception of divine subjects as well, and as much as the other character. But then his MOTIVE is different, and his END is superior. His motive is not for the sake of knowing merely, but for the sake of receiving and doing ! His end is not to be more intelligent than others, appear wiser, and so be exalted in their esteem ; but it is, that by the knowledge of truth, he may attain to the good of truth, and be himself made good by the LORD ! Hence, he not only thirsts for knowledge and truth, but he hungers at the same time for the reception of good and love ; in short, he hungers after righteous affections and righteous perceptions, and thus he both hungers and thirsts after righteousness. Consequently he is not puffed up and inflated with an abundance of spiritual drink, whether water or wine—natural or spiritual truth,—but he appropriates both spiritual drink and spiritual food for the support, strength,

health, and life of the whole man—the heart as well as the head. By these he is continually improving and growing up into the vigour, beauty, and glory of eternal life.

Hence, my brethren, we may perceive, not only the infinite importance of seeking after and obtaining spiritual science, knowledge, and intelligence, but also the infinite importance of seeking after and obtaining them, in a sincere and humble state of mind, from pure spiritual motives, and to a pure spiritual end! Much as I would commend a thirst after and a diligent seeking for divine knowledge, I feel a desire to caution my brethren against an improper or too ardent thirst for it, apart from practical and moral considerations. If our desire for truth be ever accompanied with an equal desire for good, we shall do well. But this union of intellectual and moral desire will only exist when we apply the truth we already know to the life, or reduce it to practice, as truth divine given from the LORD expressly for our regeneration. Thus the truth being united with the good, we need not, and shall not, be over anxious for more knowledge, because, while living in this state, good, of necessity, will appropriate its own truth, and truth, its own good. There will, no doubt, be a desire, and an ever-increasing desire, for more truth, but then that desire being for the sake of its own congenial good, the mind will be open to, and receptive of, divine truth from the LORD,—for through all instrumental means He is our only real teacher,—and it will be given in proper time, and in proper measure. Being assured of this, our desire will be regulated by the Divine will, wisdom, and providence of Jesus Christ our God and Father. Let us just compare one state with the other by way of conclusion.

Behold a man entering into an acquaintance with the spiritual and divine subjects of the New dispensation.—He is diligent in acquiring knowledge, he advances rapidly into the science of the doctrines, truths, mysteries, and deep arcana of the Word; he is elevated into the light of heaven; he professes the doctrines; joins the Church; he knows much, and talks well, and to the edification of many. But notwithstanding all his knowledge and intelligence, profession and talk, he has only obtained this elevated state from the mere love of knowing, of being intelligent, and accumulating a rich store of what he calls wisdom. His knowledge and his truths are almost entirely confined to the understanding; for they have not so entered into the will as truly to reform the whole mind. Divine good

has not been the grand object, and therefore the heart is not renewed; the interior life is unchanged; the natural man unpurified. In fact, regeneration has not taken place. Consequently, when he enters the world of spirits, his real state will be known; his internal be laid open; and then all his spiritual science, knowledge, and intelligence—not having been improved, having no life in them, that is, no good—will soon be taken from him. Not having been born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* He cannot endure the holy presence of the angels. Internals therefore surround him. He is deprived of all his knowledge of the truth. He sinks from his elevated station, associates with like companions, and falls into a state of spiritual insanity and wretchedness for ever!

On the other hand; behold a sincere, humble, religious man, to whom, through the bounty of Divine Providence, the peculiar light and mercy of the New dispensation have been presented. He reads, he studies, he believes. Divine truth enlightens his understanding and affects his will; he immediately applies the truth to the life, by receiving it affectionately, obeying it sincerely, putting away evils, and practically regarding the divine laws. He goes on from time to time improving in knowledge, and advancing in the heavenly life. He thirsts to know more, that he may be the better acquainted with his God, and with his duties. His motive is pure, his end is pure; and therefore he grows in wisdom as well as in knowledge, for he grows in goodness, and thence finds that the more faithful to God he lives, the wiser he becomes. Hence he hungers for divine good and purity, and the blessed qualities of the LORD's kingdom, as much as he thirsts for truth and knowledge to lead him to the possession of them. The more he knows, the more humble and self-abased he becomes; and consequently the more receptive of divine truth and good from the LORD. Hence his knowledge becomes intelligence; and his intelligence, wisdom. Because he knows truth, he loves truth, and he lives the life of truth. And this life being founded in holy principles of charity and faith, he is a man of true wisdom, inasmuch as his will and understanding, his affections and thoughts, his internal and external, are all devoted to a spiritual and heavenly life of goodness, use, and divine order! This true man and faithful disciple of the LORD, when he enters the world of spirits, and his internal is laid open, will appear angelic in nature and state; and when

* John iii. 3.

divested of remaining imperfections, will be conducted by his brother angels into the New heavens, to enjoy the unspeakable reward of divine mercy, and advance in knowledge and wisdom, goodness and love, purity and use, and at the same time in the ineffable peace, delight, and felicity, of that holy state for ever !

SECTION XXV.

THE NOMINAL AND THE REAL MEMBER OF THE NEW CHURCH.

By a nominal member, I mean one who has read or heard the doctrines and truths of the New Church, and having received them, has made an open profession of them, and that previous to a state of genuine repentance ; hence his faith is built upon a sandy foundation, inasmuch as repentance, rightly understood, is the only solid foundation of the Church in man. And in proof that man can neither receive the LORD nor the things of his Church and kingdom, without repentance, John the Baptist was sent before the LORD to preach the doctrine of repentance, and thus prepare the way for the reception of Jesus Christ and his gospel.* And Jesus Himself said, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel."† "The disciples also went out and preached that men should repent."‡ And our LORD, to show the absolute necessity for repentance, has told us, "That except we repent, we shall all likewise perish."§ Hence it is plain, that if we receive, believe, and profess the doctrines and truths of the New Church, and yet have not truly and sincerely done the work of repentance, we are only nominal professors, and nothing more. As to what true repentance is, I must refer you to the writings of our Author. || (It does not comport with the design of this work, I may here remark, to treat upon and explain doctrines.) Now, where true repentance has not taken place, there can be no true reformation either of heart or life ; consequently, such a person cannot be a real member of the Church. How can any one be in the LORD's Church, if he has

* Matt. iii. 1, 2, 3.

§ Luke xiii. 3, 5.

† Matt. iii. 15.

|| See *Universal Theology*, chap. ix.

‡ Mark vi. 12.

not seen his evils and condemned them; if he has not humbled himself before the LORD on account of them; if he has not forsaken and hated them as sins against God; and thus effectually reformed his life and conduct? It is very possible for a man in this state to receive, believe, and profess the doctrines and truths of the New Church, and join himself with the people. The subjects announced to the world at this day are extraordinary, and there is a natural curiosity in the mind to know them. Hence, such characters as the above may be disposed to inquire about them, to read the writings, and to hear the preaching; they may be struck with the novelty, and perhaps with the truth. They proceed; gain considerable light in the understanding; they believe the doctrines they read of or hear; they conceive a natural affection for them, and feel a delight in the novel and wondrous subjects. They proceed in their investigation, and gain more knowledge, are still more pleased, and desire to associate with those who know the doctrines, and worship agreeably to them. They become acquainted with a society, attend the Church, and presently enter as members. But, nevertheless, all this light, faith, and affection are only in the understanding, and in the natural love. Such professors can talk much, do much externally for the Church, and hence may vainly conclude they belong to the Church, are in the right way, and that heaven is their own. Nothing is more easy than self-deception in matters of a religious nature. These persons not having truly repented, nor seen and felt themselves as nothing but evil; and not having, in all self-abasement and humility, approached the LORD, and implored his divine mercy and assistance, their spiritual mind is still closed or shut up against the divine influx, and consequently no pure faith, spiritual light, nor holy love and charity, can exist in the interiors of their minds. But these christian graces being the very essence of the Church and of all true religion, and such characters being destitute of them, they can be nothing more than mere nominal professors, "having a name to live, while they are dead."* With all their knowledge, light, zeal, and profession, they are all the while as much solifidians,—as much confirmed in faith alone—in faith without works, without penitence, reformation, or charity, as if they held the solifidian "Protestant" dogma of justification without works. Nevertheless, astonishing as it is, they are so much in self-deception, and so

* Rev. iii. 1.

blind to the real state of their hearts, that they conceive themselves to be actually sincere recipients of the doctrines and truths of the New Jerusalem, and therefore in the right way to the New heavens, where they shall be happy for ever! I have my fears that there may be some of this description even in the visible New Church. We well know there were such in the early days of the Christian Church. Even while the LORD Himself was among them, Judas was one,—a standing and awful example to all ages! Peter had nearly fallen into the same snare; and it is said “many of the LORD’s disciples went away, and walked no more with him.”* And let me again advert for our admonition to the case of Judas. That wicked apostle took charge of the apostles’ property; or was the purse-bearer; and we find that because he cared not for the poor while he professed that he did so, he was pronounced “a thief.”† Hence we see, that the rich are the LORD’s purse-bearers, but if they do not respond to the demands of use and charity upon their purses, in his sight they are “thieves,” however honest they may be in their transactions in the sight of men. Let the LORD’s words sound in the ears of all such nominal professors, —who, by the way, are often very decent in their deportment, and regular in their attendance on ordinances—let them remember the words, “Take heed and beware of covetousness.” “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” “If any man (says John) love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” And James is still more plain when he says, “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you.” “The love of money (says the apostle) is the root of all evil.” And that is the great sin of the present age, and the canker worm of many a religious, but merely nominal professor.

How important then it is for us to know what our real state is. And cannot we determine whether we are nominal professors only, or not? I am sure we may if we please. Please, did I say?—Why life or death, misery or happiness, hell or heaven, depend upon the state in which we stand! And can we hesitate, neglect, or trifle with these infinitely important subjects? Let every one solemnly address himself and say,—“If I will but examine, it is easy for me to know whether I have truly repented or not; whether I have sincerely and without reservation reformed my conduct and life; whether I have sought out and seen my evils; hated them; and desisted from them; whe-

* John vi. 66.

† John xii. 6; xiii. 29.

ther my heart be changed; my life's-love altered; and I have left the road of folly, evil, and death, for the straight path of truth, goodness, and life eternal!" These are things and subjects so plain, so easy to be understood and known, that we can have no excuse if we live and die unacquainted with them. It is a most painful thought that any who name the name of Jesus Christ as their God, should "honour Him with their lips while their heart is far from Him:" should be either unfaithful to Him, or to themselves, and sink into the regions of eternal despair and woe, at the very time they hope to enter into the heavens of everlasting joy! Nominal professors may deceive their brethren for a time, and even for some years; but could they do so all through their lives, it would not be of any real advantage to themselves. It is true, they might be esteemed as members; they might even enjoy a little human applause; and they might further some temporal interest; but, alas! what is all this? a mere vapour! soon over and gone, and lost for ever! And would any man barter his soul and his eternal well-being for such empty nothings as these? He must surely be insane if he does! But it generally turns out that these professors sooner or later tear in pieces their own outside garments, or cast away their "sheep's clothing." Their pent up impure loves and concupiscences by and by break through their external restraints, and, from various causes, manifest themselves in the external, and so by evils of life, exhibit the man not according to his assumed name, but according to his real character and corrupt nature, and shew him to have been a wolf in sheep's clothing. And when this is the case, he loses his reputation and character as a christian, shame and disgrace follow him, and not unfrequently "he returns as the dog to his vomit, or as the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire*," "and the last state of that man is worse than the first."† "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."‡

From this description of the nominal Christian, we shall be at no loss to know the state and character of the true Christian. It will be easy to perceive that the real member of the LORD's New Church is a spiritual man, consequently that he has passed through states of true penitence and actual reformation; has humbled himself before the LORD, and implored his divine mercy, and with his divine assistance has prepared himself for the reception of spiritual and divine communications. He has

* 2 Peter ii. 22.

† Matt. xii. 45.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 12.

entered into covenant with the LORD, and kept that covenant "whole and undefiled." He has given himself to the LORD, who, in return, has given Himself to him, by his proceeding Spirit. He has passed from death unto life because he "loves the brethren."* He has opened the door of his heart, and not only the light of truth has entered to establish within him a sound faith, but also a pure heavenly love to the LORD, to his Word, and his kingdom:—his heart is changed as well as his external conduct reformed. He shuns evils, not lest they should appear before men, but because he hates them as sins against God; for God is the highest object of his love. He receives the extraordinary mercies of the New dispensation, not because they are novel and wonderful things, but as divine realities calculated to promote his regeneration, and elevate his affections into all that is good and true, useful and heavenly. His attachment to them is not a merely natural affection, founded in self-regards and self-interest, but a truly spiritual affection; he loves these great truths because they are designed to advance his purification, and bring him into the humility, righteousness, and divine order of the LORD's kingdom. Whatever appertains to this kingdom he loves and delights in; and hence he will be led to form an acquaintance with the subjects of it, join their Society, unite in their worship, and become a faithful and exemplary member of that Church where his heart is, and where his eternal treasure is deposited. Whether he talk much or little, he will speak from sincere affection; whether able to do much or little in and for the Church, he will do it with a good will; he certainly expects and hopes for a place in the heavens of his God, but he is more anxious to be prepared and qualified for holy activities by regeneration, than for any superior or elevated station there. The more he advances in the life of heaven, the more he perceives his own unworthiness, and is willing to become the least, and to serve, instead of coveting an exaltation above others. As he is no solidian doctrinally, so neither is he practically. He trusts not to his knowledge or faith alone; nor does he place any merit in his own works. He is just as far from the one as the other, and sincerely disclaims both. Love being his ruling principle, that principle gives life to his faith, and prompts him to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameless, and with true delight of soul. But while he is thus living and acting as of himself, he

* 1 John iii. 14.

knows, and most gratefully acknowledges that the principle, the power, the desire to obey, and that every good work, is from the LORD alone, and to him he devoutly ascribes all the praise.

Such is the real and spiritual member of the LORD's New Church. However unwilling we may be to exalt ourselves, or however disposed to humility and self-abasement (and we cannot be too much so) we may nevertheless know and determine whether we are, or are not, the real and spiritual members of the LORD's Church. And as to be such is of infinite importance to our present peace and future happiness, may we every one individually enter into a serious examination of our own states, and give ourselves no rest until we can determine by just evidence and happy experience, that we are the true and living subjects of the New Jerusalem on earth, and in our blessed progress to the New heavens of Jesus Christ our LORD. To Him be all honour, glory, and praise for ever and ever !

SECTION XXVI.

DEPENDANCE UPON THE LORD, AND RESIGNATION TO HIS DIVINE WILL AND PROVIDENCE.

THE mental state of the spiritual and renewed man is immensely different from that of the natural and evil man; and it is the state of the former which constitutes the ground-work or foundation of all those peculiar mercies and favours of a spiritual and heavenly kind, which the renewed man enjoys. If we think we are such, we must recollect what our LORD said of his disciples, for this will equally apply to us, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."* If, then, we are true disciples, we are separated from the world as to state, character, and life; we are no longer the subjects of the infernal kingdom; no longer slaves to the tyranny of worldly corruptions, maxims, and customs; no longer in bondage to our own degenerate selfhood; no longer our own, but the LORD's! Brought into his Church, we are the subjects of his kingdom; in covenant with him, so that he is our life,—our

* John xvii. 6, 14.

new life, and we are his people! Hence the following words apply to us, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God."* No language can possibly be stronger, or more fully express the conjunction of the regenerate man with the LORD in his Divine Humanity, than our being his people, and he being our God. Here, then, we behold how close is our spiritual and eternal relation to Jehovah Jesus, not only as our Redeemer, our ruler, and our head, but also as our very life, and our Divine, infinitely wise and good parent. As such we are his own spiritual children, "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."† Consequently we are not only under that particular providence of our Divine parent which embraces the evil as well as the good; but also under his peculiar care, protection, assistance, and direction, or, in one word, we are the actual and experimental objects of his divine parental love! This being our happy condition, and having received this unspeakable mercy, we must feel it to be our obligation, as well as our highest interest, wholly to depend upon such a God and Father, without fear or distrust. Let us only satisfy ourselves, upon spiritual and scriptural grounds, that we are in this holy and blessed conjunction with Jesus Christ our God, and we shall be at no loss to perceive the applicability to ourselves of the subject before us. It is for want of this conjunction,—or if really in it, for want of considering its true nature, and the wonderful mercies connected with it,—that we are so prone to depend upon ourselves, our own prudence, industry, and wisdom, unconnected with, forgetful of, or not in due subordination to, the care, the direction, and the providence of our Heavenly Father. Whereas we shall always find in the end, that just so much as we depend upon any thing of self, or self-derived, we trust to a broken reed; our expectations fail us, and disappointment is our only reward. Or if we depend upon the world, or worldly things, either for peace, happiness, or comfort, we are then acting like men of the world, and deceiving ourselves, by looking to that which never did and never can give one moment's true happiness, or any solid satisfaction to an immortal being. Would to God that all would bear in mind the apostle's words, "Whosoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."‡

* Rev. xxi. 3.

† John i. 13.

‡ Gal. vi. 7.

Great indeed would be the blessing to us, did we constantly consider and bear in mind our own weakness and ignorance. For is it not owing to our self-confidence that we so frequently injure ourselves by our want of judgment, prudence, or propriety of conduct, in the common concerns of natural life? And if so, how much more weak and ignorant are we as to our spiritual states; and as to how we should conduct ourselves; and in regard to what is good for us, and what is not so; what to shun, and what to do; and how we shall live and act in all cases and under all the vicissitudes and difficulties, infestations and temptations, snares and trials, to which we are exposed in our progress through the wilderness to Canaan? As to all these things we are, of ourselves, in the merest ignorance; and without the Divine guidance we should run into error, evil, and misery, every day we live. Verily our LORD declares with infinite truth, "without me, ye can do nothing." So prone are we to err, so headstrong is our proprium, so ensnaring the world, and so powerful the infernal influx, that we have need to pray continually in the words of inspiration, "O send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles."* And to remember, also, the LORD's injunction, "Watch and pray, that ye fall not into temptation." It may be thought by an externally-minded Christian, that an ENTIRE dependance upon the LORD is not required, nor even compatible with the necessary freedom, activity, and prudence of man. What then did the LORD mean when he said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?"† He certainly meant that we should not only be little children as to innocence and simplicity, but also as to dependance upon our Heavenly Father; that as a child looks up to its parent for whatever it wants, and is without any anxiety or care for its support, so we likewise should look up to our Heavenly Father for all the spiritual blessings we stand in need of, and for every favour and every good necessary for us in our journey to his kingdom. How expressly and fully are we taught to depend upon and trust in Him as our Divine parent, when he says, "Therefore I say unto you take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they

* Psalm xliii. 3.

† Matt. xviii. 3.

reap, nor gather into barns, yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature? Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”* It is surely impossible for words more fully to convince us of the Divine care, providence, and mercy of the LORD towards his spiritual children. Nor can any words more powerfully encourage and excite us to place our whole dependance and trust in the LORD, as our Heavenly Father. And no doubt He taught all in his Divine prayer to begin with the words “Our Father,” to inspire them with confidence at all times, that He loves them as a Father, with the tenderest love; and therefore they ought entirely to resign themselves to his fatherly care. Indeed there is no surer consolation through all the troubled path of life, or at the point of death, than that afforded by the words “Our Father,” when understood in their full force. I might refer you to hundreds of passages in the psalms, prophets, and other books of the holy Word, which assure us, “that they who trust in the LORD shall not want any good.” Let us then, my brethren, maintain this state of humble but confident dependance upon our God. His particular Providence is over us every moment of our lives, and his tender mercies can never fail. We shall have to pass through states of adversity and prosperity, in spiritual things, as well as natural; states of infestation and temptation; states of depression as well as elevation; we shall come to the “bitter waters of Marah,” as well as to “Elam, with its twelve fountains and threescore and ten palm trees.”† And in all these states through which we must pass in the course of our regeneration, where will be our support, our consolation, or our faith, if we depend not upon the LORD Jesus Christ our omnipotent and all-merciful Father and Saviour? “Vain is the help of man.” “Cursed is the man who trusteth in man.” “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be [anxiously]

* Matt. vi. 25 to the end.

† Exodus xv. 23, 27.

careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.*

The dependance upon the LORD we are now speaking of, is not for temporal objects merely, but for blessings the truly Christian man values above all others, and consequently desires the enjoyment of beyond all others. They are blessings which can only be given by the LORD Himself, and must flow down to us from Him, through the heavens. As therefore we can only receive them from Him, we must depend upon Him for them,—that is, if we really desire them, or, in other words, if we are willing “to take up our cross” in order to obtain them! The more we desire and love the Divine good and truth, the bread and wine of the kingdom, and those blessed communications which are essential to our advancement in the regeneration, and our progress in purity, righteousness, and heavenly order, the more firm and strong will be our dependance upon the LORD, and the more abundantly shall we be supplied with every needful good and favour, at all times, and in all cases. And what is further to be noted is, that as we thus depend upon our God for spiritual blessings, so we shall equally depend upon Him for temporal ones. He that gives the greater, will not withhold the less. Therefore he says, “ALL these [temporal] things shall be added unto you”—you, that is,—who “seek in the FIRST PLACE, God’s kingdom and righteousness.”† But it should be remembered, that as to temporal things, our happiness does not at all depend “upon the abundance of what we possess.”‡ The rich man is not on that account any nearer heaven, or any more the subject of Divine grace than the poor man. Neither has the LORD any respect to temporal things, either to give or to withhold, any further than as conducive to an eternal end, that is, our final felicity in his kingdom. Hence, the truly good man will make a proper estimate of all such good, and depend upon the Divine Providence of his Heavenly Father in all states and circumstances through life; and he who so does, is the blessed, the happy man! He remembers that, as regards temporal goods, he is allowed only to supplicate for his “daily bread.”

Our resignation to the Divine will is immediately connected with our dependance upon the Divine goodness; and just so far as we depend upon the everlasting love of the LORD Jesus Christ as our Heavenly Father, we shall be calmly resigned to his

* Jeremiah xvii. 5 to 8.

† Matt. vi. 33.

‡ Luke xii. 15.

parental will, authority, and government; to all that He appoints, and all that He permits. In fact, entire resignation to the LORD's good providence, comprehends every thing; for he who is resigned to the will of the LORD, knows him, loves him, sees that his will in man, and as done by man, is the sum total of happiness. But it must be confessed that there is a great difference between being resigned to the LORD when we are not afflicted, and when we are. It is affliction only that puts to the proof, whether we are really resigned or not. Those who fail in this proof will often try a middle point, short of resignation, in which, while they do not venture so far as to war against God Himself, they vent a kind of angry feeling at the affliction itself. This is altogether a vain attempt. It may serve to try the Divine forbearance; but it brings the sufferer himself no good, and makes his divinely intended purificatory sufferings to be endured in vain! To make them of any use to him, he must make them eminently the occasion of exercising patience, submission, and resignation. It is the sad lot of multitudes to suffer in vain, because they suffer without resignation. How inconsistent to believe in Infinite Goodness, and then place no confidence in It. How inconsistent to profess a desire for purification, and then to meet affliction with loathing, and thus neutralize the ONLY means by which it can be effected! The LORD knows the indispensable necessity there is for affliction, and therefore, as our author informs us, prayers for the speedy termination of trials and temptations are not listened to, but only prayers for patience to endure to the end.*

One of the most pious, spiritually-intelligent, and heavenly-minded female writers I have known, makes an observation in which it will be seen she does not confine resignation to seasons of suffering, as is too commonly done, for verily if our resignation be not constant and habitual, but occurs only in suffering and the prospect of death, it is of little or no spiritual value. The observation I allude to is as follows: "There is no salvation without resigning our will to God, and no condemnation without following our own will. This is an eternal truth which will never change, for it is a general rule, that respects every one, rich, poor, learned, ignorant. If we work, and fast, and pray, and do all we can, and with all we follow our own will, we shall assuredly be miserable; and, on the other hand, let us rest, eat, and drink, and do every other thing, in depend-

* *Arcana Cœlestia*, n. 8179.

ance upon the will of God, and we shall certainly be saved." And if our blessed LORD, when in the infirm humanity, could say, before his complete glorification, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me,"* how should we, poor, sinful, dependant creatures labour to do the will of our Divine LORD, and give ourselves up in all things to his good pleasure and righteous government! Indeed we are so fully instructed upon this subject, as well as in all others, by the holy Word of the LORD, especially as it is now opened in its internal sense, that we must see the importance and necessity of dependance upon our God, and a full resignation to his Divine will.

I have next to shew that there are two kinds or degrees of dependance and resignation, or two sources of them. The one is founded in the Divine authority or command of the LORD, or in truth and faith; the other in the spontaneity of love. A man believes in God and his Word, and his faith leads him to obedience; consequently, to a dependance upon God, a desire to deny himself, to do the will of God, and be wholly resigned to Him as his Heavenly Father. And all this is good so far as it goes. But there is a still higher source of resignation than this—a more elevated principle, and which the subjects of the LORD's New Church should endeavour to attain and act from. I mean a principle of pure love, united with faith in, and a knowledge of, the one true God our LORD Jesus Christ who is Jehovah in his Divine Humanity. Now, when this is the RULING principle of the heart and life, our dependance upon the LORD will be more ready, spontaneous, full, and perfect; and what I have called resignation will then acquire a holier meaning, and another and better name; for resignation may merely imply submission without resistance or murmuring. But when love to goodness, to the LORD, and to his kingdom, rules the heart; then, to give up our will in all things to the Divine, will become, and constitute, our supreme delight. Now the terms resignation and submission do not well agree with the term delight, because to resign or submit, implies the making some sacrifice—the giving up somewhat we may have a wish to retain; whereas, what we really delight in, it is no sacrifice to do; it is of our love; and what we love to do is not submitting to do it, but delighting to do it. Now, if I were to ask the truly spiritual Christian, who acts and lives from

* John vi. 8

these superior and heavenly principles, this question,—Is it not the delight of your soul to depend wholly upon Jesus Christ, your Divine Parent, for all things, and in all states; and also to give up yourself, “body, soul, and spirit” to his Divine will? I am convinced the answer would be in the affirmative. He would reply, “Yes, it is my delight so to depend upon, and to give up my whole self unto Jesus Christ my God and Father.” Behold, then, my brethren, the exalted, the happy state of such a Christian! He depends upon his Divine Parent for all things; upon One who is infinitely wise to know his wants; infinitely good to supply them; and infinitely powerful to provide them. He gives up his body and soul, with all his powers, with the utmost cheerfulness and delight to the Divine will of an infinitely kind, tender, and compassionate Father, whose will is ever employed and engaged every moment and eternally to comfort, bless, enrich, and make perfectly and everlastingly happy every one of his children! With what peace, consolation, and content may such a Christian go on his way through life! But let it be remembered that this truly spiritual and heaven-born Christian, who depends upon his Divine Parent for all things, and willingly and cheerfully, because from delight, gives up his soul, his internal and external will, understanding, and life to the Divine will of God, does not do this presumptuously, carelessly, and in an unauthorised manner: he does not sit down in indolence, either spiritually or temporally, supposing he shall be supplied without diligence and activity, fed by a miracle, or that food and raiment, spiritual riches, and heavenly treasures will be poured down from the clouds at his request. But while he depends upon his God, and upon Him alone, as the source and the giver of every blessing, he knows there are certain appointed means to be used by which to receive them; and therefore, like a man taught of God, as well as dependant upon God, he is diligent, active, and industrious, in using all the proper means for acquiring the conditionally-promised gifts of his Father, and the blessings of his kingdom. Nor is he only active and diligent in the spiritual life, and in the attainment of eternal treasures,—although these are his chief objects, and herein his whole soul is most peculiarly and constantly engaged,—but while he depends upon Divine Providence for his temporal supplies, and the necessary blessings of this world and life, he is at the same time industrious, prudent, and careful. And as he acts from a principle of charity, success does not supersede his

diligence, because his desire is to be more useful and to do more good; therefore, the more Divine Providence gives, the more thankful he is, because the more useful he can be. And if he have but few of either spiritual or temporal blessings in comparison with others, he is still contented. He knows on whom he depends, and to whom he has given up his heart and life; he is fully assured his Divine Parent will not suffer him to want any thing that is really good and proper for him; he knows the Divine will is ever employed to bless him and make him completely happy for ever; and being thus in the stream of Divine Providence, he calmly sails along, his mind composed, his soul in peace, being confident that "they who trust in the LORD shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever."* Seeing then the importance and the blessedness of dependance upon the LORD, and resignation to his Divine will, let us recollect that of all Christians in the world we have the highest and strongest reasons, and the most heavenly encouragement, so to do; because we certainly and clearly know the one true God, even Jesus Christ, as our only Creator, Redeemer, and Saviour, our Father and our God. His Divine character and attributes are plainly set before us; and every doctrine, truth, and subject of his own eternal Word so opened to our understanding, that we cannot but see our present comfort, peace, and prosperity, with our future felicity, use, and perfect happiness, are all connected with, yea, founded on, our unreserved dependance upon Jesus Christ, our Divine Parent, for all things; and our freely and cheerfully giving up our hearts and lives, our bodies, souls, and spirits to the Divine will and government of our adored and beloved LORD! May we do so in all humility, confidence, faith, and love, and we shall want no good thing through this world; and be crowned hereafter with all the inconceivable good of heaven for ever!

SECTION XXVII.

THE HOLY WORD.

It is written that a glorious appearance of a man was seen by John in vision, and it is said—"His name is called the Word

* Psalm cxxi. 1.

OF GOD,"*—evidently teaching us that the LORD Jesus Christ or Jehovah as to his Divine Humanity, is Himself the living and eternal truth and wisdom constituent of Divine Revelation. Consequently, such revelation is that of the full and perfect Divine spiritual and celestial mind, will, and Word of Jehovah God, made known in the best possible manner to angels and to men. And if so, not any other particular or general vouchsafement from Him, or message, instruction, or communication through any human medium, can possibly supersede the Holy Word, or render it less important or necessary. It must still stand; and will for ever stand, the infallible, eternal, and infinite source of all divine truth, intelligence, and wisdom; from whence, as a living and inexhaustible fountain, all religious and spiritual, celestial and heavenly instruction, light, and life are to be obtained. Highly therefore as we esteem and venerate the writings of our illuminated author, Emanuel Swedenborg, believing them to contain a peculiar message from the LORD, and that they are designed to open to man the spiritual sense of the Holy Word by means of the divine science of correspondences now revealed, and thus preparing the way for the second advent of Jesus Christ into the human soul, in the power and great glory of the good and truth of his interior Word, shining through the lucid clouds of its literal sense, and which advent we are assured is already commenced with all sincere recipients of the Divine gift; nevertheless, we do hope that these writings will never be considered by any persons as rendering the Holy Word in the letter, less important, or less necessary to be attended to, read, and studied with all seriousness and affection, as the one abiding fountain of all truth, light, and wisdom. But rather, we hope that the writings will, agreeably to their intention and proper use, enhance our estimation of the Word of Divine Revelation; and induce us to read it more than ever, and with a degree of edification, profit, and delight we never before experienced. For, I am well persuaded, that should the writings operate, or be viewed and taken up in any different way, they will operate in a way never intended by the merciful Father of our souls, and bring upon us darkness and death, rather than light and life eternal. I am well aware that upon this subject there may be some danger. It is possible that certain persons of imaginative minds may not only be highly delighted with the wonderful information given therein of spiri-

* Rev. xix. 13.

tual things and states, but also may form an idea that because they have these writings, it is not so very necessary to read the Word in the letter, since all that is important for instruction concerning the Christian life and salvation, may be found in the writings. Thus might serious minds be led away from the Word itself, and seeking to please themselves with interior subjects and spiritual arcana, might too much neglect that becoming conduct, good order, and active life, which the doctrines, truths, and precepts of the Holy Word in the letter so positively and clearly demand, as essential to the happiness of man. The writings are a key to the understanding of the Word. That is the true and real relation of the Word and the writings to each other. The writings are no more a stream from the Word, than a key is a stream from a lock; still less are the writings continuous from the Word, like a river extended.

“The Word of God is divine in all and every particular part thereof, for whatsoever proceeds from the divinity must of necessity be divine. That Word which proceeds from the divinity descends through the heavens down to man, hence it is accommodated in the heavens to the wisdom of the angels who dwell there; and it is accommodated on earth to the understandings and capacities of men. Consequently, there is contained in the Word of God an internal sense which is spiritual, adapted to the use of angels; and an external sense which is natural, adapted to the use of men. Hence, by means of the Word of God, there is a continual union or communication preserved between the inhabitants of heaven and men upon earth.”* Moreover, “the divine truth of the Word in its literal sense, is in its fulness, its sanctity, and its power.” Whence it follows, that the Word can only be in its fulness, sanctity, and power, AS TO OURSELVES, when its literal sense is understood by us, believed in, and obeyed. In this case, we have conjunction with the LORD and consociation with the angels. But it is well to be remembered, that the divine truths of the Word can only be clearly understood by those who are interiorly enlightened by the LORD; and those only are so enlightened who are under the influence of love and faith towards Him, for the interiors of the souls of such persons are elevated by the LORD into the light of heaven. As, then, the holy Word of God is accommodated in its literal sense to men, and in that sense divine truth is in its fulness, sanctity, and power, and thereby gives con-

* *Heavenly Doctrine*, n. 252.

junction with the LORD and consociation with the angels, the great importance of attending to the Word, reading it often, and making it the sole rule of our faith and practice, must be evident to every serious mind. But it deserves to be particularly noted,—what, indeed, I have already remarked,—that only to those persons who are under the influence of love and faith towards the LORD, can the divine truths of the Word be made apparent so as to be clearly understood, because only such are enlightened by Him. It is true that merely natural men who will strongly to see the truth, may see it in a low degree and general manner, through the Divine mercy operating to raise their understandings for the time above their corrupt wills into the light of heaven, to the end that by the truth thus seen, their wills may be eventually rebuked and reformed. But merely natural men do not commonly will to see the truth, and that is the reason they instantly reject our truths when offered to them. It is because “there is no light in them.”

In proportion, then, to our love of the LORD and our faith in Him, will be our attention to the holy Word in the letter, our understanding of it, and our delight in it. And I must express my fear that some of our friends inconsiderately neglect the duty and privilege of reading and meditating upon the holy Word of our merciful Father and LORD! If this divine Word be really the medium of our conjunction with the LORD's Divine Humanity, and of consociation with the angels, and we really believe it to be so, should we not then consider, that whenever we seriously take up that Word to read a part of it, we then have the LORD Himself more immediately present with us? And if we read under the influence of love and faith towards Him, what benefit, what blessedness, shall we not receive by a zealous and spiritual attention to the reading and study of it? As such, therefore, I cannot but earnestly recommend, that whenever we take up the Holy Word for perusal, we divest our minds and thoughts of all natural, worldly, and lower considerations; and recollecting that the Word is the LORD Himself in that form manifested, or his own divine mind and will thus presented to us, let us consider ourselves as applying to Him, in his more immediate presence, for divine instruction, through his Word, looking up with devout and affectionate hearts to his Divine Humanity, for illumination into its holy and ever-blessed contents. Thus doing, whether we read little or much at a time, our understandings will be enlightened and

edified, our hearts will be enriched with celestial and spiritual good, and our states in the regeneration be more or less advanced. It is for want of **THUS** reading the Holy Word, that we are no more impressed with its importance, and no more edified and enriched with its inexhaustible treasures. I cannot approve of our confining ourselves merely to reading a certain portion, or a chapter of the Word, at a set time of the day. This may be very well in itself, and especially if we so read to our family, and still more if we endeavour to explain it according to the light and knowledge we possess. But when we confine ourselves to this custom, it becomes a habit, and, as such, is in some danger of becoming a mere formality; for we are too apt to rest satisfied that we have done our duty when we have conformed to our custom; and that degree of attention is not given, and benefit received, which is so necessary to our states, in the progress of our regeneration. Whereas, if we make it our care to read the Holy Word privately, and for ourselves, in the manner mentioned above, we are then in more immediate communion with our blessed **LORD**, and shall not fail of a peculiar blessing. Moreover when we so read and find our minds more enlightened, our hearts more affected and warmed with the heat and light of heaven, the Word thus becomes more delightful to us, and our thirst is increased for the appropriation of its living waters, which are calculated, as we then find from experience, to refresh the soul, invigorate and enrich the spiritual man, and animate him in the way to his Father's kingdom. Experience, my brethren, convinces me how useful, how important, how essential it is **THUS** to read, study, and meditate upon this Divine and infinite source of all spiritual light and life; and the more we so do, the more are we elevated into spiritual intelligence and wisdom, a nearer consociation with the angels, and a more blessed conjunction with Jesus Christ our God! I am not for making much distinction between one part of the Word and another; nor is it for me to say which part would be most edifying to others; but from my own experience and spiritual benefit, I cannot help recommending to truly spiritual Christians, the frequent reading of the Book of Psalms. Every thing therein has so clear a reference to the **LORD** in his humanity; to his Church and people; and is so peculiarly adapted to the various states of the spiritual man, to direct, support, encourage, animate, and strengthen his mind, and to open to him the infinite love and mercy of the **LORD** in

our redemption, the divine order and process of our regeneration, and the eternal realities of the heavenly state, life, and kingdom, that I want words to express my estimation of, delight in, and edification from, that ever-blessed divine book! But, indeed, we may say the like as to every part of divine revelation, containing, as it does, the infinite wisdom and love of our merciful Redeemer and Heavenly Father! I would observe also, that as another means to open the internal sense of the Holy Word to our understanding, and increase our delight therein, it may be well when we are reading if there be any part which is not so clear to the mind, to refer to the writings of our Author, to ascertain the true and spiritual sense of the passage; as there are few difficult parts of the Word but what are explained in those heaven-taught writings. My brethren will also bear in mind, that the Word of the LORD is not given to men only; it exists in all the heavens; it is read in its spiritual sense by the angels; it is the source of their intelligence and wisdom; it is the divine and inexhaustible fountain of living water at which they drink through all eternity; it is the celestial wine which cheers the hearts, invigorates the minds, and fills the souls of the blessed inhabitants of heaven with unnumbered beatitudes, joys, and felicities of life! If then the Holy Word of truth and love be all this, and immensely more than my feeble powers can describe, to these ever-blessed and happy spirits in the kingdom of their God, how ought it to be valued and loved by us, while in this wilderness of error and evil, darkness and danger, being, as it is, our infallible guide, our defence and security against every enemy, a light to our path, and an ever-watchful companion and adviser in our consciences, which will never leave us, till we are safely conducted by it even to the gates of the kingdom,—the eternal heavens of rest and peace! When therefore we consider the true nature and design of the LORD's most Holy Word, we shall then not only perceive how necessary it is to read it, study it, and be well acquainted with its sacred contents, but we shall equally understand what is the object or the end we should have in view, when reading this unspeakable gift from God to man. For our grand object should be, to obtain all that, and to be all that, which this Divine Word invites us to obtain, and directs us to be, and in these two circumstances is contained the sum total of human excellence and happiness for ever. And what is the true and real ground of the love of truth. or what is the

same, the love of the Word? I answer, it is the love of purity, and every true lover of the Word will, therefore, be able to say with David, "Thy Word is very pure, and THEREFORE thy servant loveth it."* And shall not that blessed volume, so pure and luminous, be read and studied with ardour and delight;—a book which invites us to obtain a deliverance from all evil and pollution; a separation from the hells; full redemption and salvation from sin; full regeneration into the purity of heaven and the likeness of God; a blessed conjunction of life with the LORD Jesus Christ; and the perfect felicity of his everlasting kingdom? Must not this Divine Word be most precious to my soul,—let every one say for himself,—when it directs me in the plainest manner what I am to be in order that I may obtain unspeakable felicity? shews me what I am to shun, what I am to do, in what to believe, the objects of my supreme love, and how I am to live so that I may be an angel for ever? Can I then read and study this Divine Word at suitable times too much, or too often, when by means of it such infinitely important objects are to be secured? Certainly not; if it be my desire to obtain, and to be, all that which our ever-merciful LORD, by his Word, requires us to obtain, and to be. Then shall we unitedly say from the heart, in the language of divine inspiration, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward!"* Let me, then, again most earnestly recommend to my brethren the constant, serious, and devout reading of the Holy Word, and always with this end in view,—TO UNDERSTAND IT BETTER, LOVE IT MORE, AND OBEY IT IN GREATER PURITY. And if this be our end, when we take up the Holy Word we shall consider that the LORD Himself is thereby speaking to us; and we shall look up to Him with a thirsting and hungering mind to drink the waters of life, and eat the bread of heaven. The certain consequence will be an increase of knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom in divine things; the more easy and abundant appro-

* Psalm cxix. 140.

† Psalm xix. 7, 6, 11.

priation of celestial love and good; and the higher elevation of the spiritual man into the uses, purities, and felicities of the LORD's kingdom. Moreover, when we consider what divine revelation is called, what it discovers to us, and what it is designed to do for us, its infinite value and excellence must be evident to every spiritual Christian. It is called—the Word of God,—a fountain of living water,—spirit and life,—a guide,—a defence,—a purifier,—a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path,—divine truth,—with many other equally just and attractive appellations, and, in one word, it is the infinite and eternal source of all spiritual and heavenly instruction, intelligence, and wisdom to men on earth, and angels and good spirits in heaven, through the boundless ages of eternity! It discovers to us all we want to know of the One True God,—of ourselves,—of the way to heaven, and our final, and everlasting states. It is designed to lead us safely and surely through this world, accomplish our regeneration, prepare us for the kingdom of God, and introduce us into the heavens of perfect happiness, and glory! Turn, my brethren, to the cxixth Psalm, and observe how fervidly it celebrates throughout, in every variety of phrase, the excellence of the LORD's revealed Word, as containing the “laws, commandments, precepts, judgments, statutes, testimonies, and truths” of Jehovah, and the blessedness of those who observe them.

When we take these just views of the Holy Word, and recollect, that whatever is manifested to us in the luminous writings of the LORD's servant, Emanuel Swedenborg, is all founded upon and contained in this Divine Word of revelation; in what a new, glorious, and animating light does that Word appear to our intellectual eye by means of these writings. It might be reasonably expected that, far from reading and meditating upon the Word less than heretofore, we shall read it, study it, and delight in it more frequently and devoutly than ever we did before we received these writings. As to what mere external professors may do, who are only pleased with the novelty and wonderful information contained in the writings, we cannot expect the Divine Word will be attended to either frequently or profitably by such characters; but thoughtful and spiritually-minded Christians of the New Church will see the beauty, the glory, and the heavenly uses of the LORD's Word in so strong and animating a light, as to make it their beloved companion, monitor, and friend, every day they live. And thus while the

writings of our Author lead them to read and study the holy volume more frequently, and with ever-increasing delight and illumination, the Word, thus applied to habitually, will lead them back to the writings, and enable them to understand their contents more clearly, and with more spiritual profit and edification to their souls. Thus happily will the reading of the Word lead to the reading of the writings; and the reading of these, again, lead to the reading of the Word.

I have earnestly recommended an attention to the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, and I as earnestly repeat that recommendation, for I am assured that the better we are acquainted with them, the more enlightened shall we be in all rational, moral, spiritual, and Divine subjects. It is greatly to be regretted that any persons who believe those writings to contain a special communication from Jesus Christ in these latter days, in which extraordinary aid from above is so greatly wanted, should neglect so invaluable a gift, by not perusing them at all convenient opportunities, but satisfying themselves with the information they gain once in the week from a sermon, or by conversing now and then with a friend, when all the while they know and believe that subjects of infinite importance to their well-being in this world, and their eternal blessedness in the world to come, are contained in these extraordinary and divinely-illuminated pages. If then I neglect to read and study these heaven-taught writings, is it not reasonable to suppose I shall equally neglect the Divine Word? But if with constancy, seriousness, and delight, I read and study the writings, it is reasonable to suppose I shall read and study the Holy Word also, inasmuch as both the one and the other direct and lead me to the like grand and glorious end, my perfect and everlasting happiness in the kingdom of my God and Saviour!

But, my dear friends, allow me further to say, that after all that has been said upon this subject, it is most certain that our attention to the Holy Word and the writings will be in exact agreement with our ruling love. If our ruling love be fixed upon the right and proper objects, namely, on the LORD and his kingdom; and that love be vigorous and active, it will create in us a thirsting and a hungering for that drink and food which alone can invigorate, feed, support, and delight it. Do we not find that a thirsty man is not only willing but eager to quench his thirst? and a hungry man equally anxious to allay his hunger? And thus it ever is, and must be, with the truly spiritual

man, whose ruling love is heavenly. He can truly say in the language of David "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"* Behold then, my brethren, the state of the truly good man. "He thirsteth," but for what? For truth, for wisdom, for living water, suited to his ardent love, and calculated to gratify his longing desire. And where must he go for this water? Let Jesus Christ inform him, for he saith, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth in me according to the Scripture, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."† Now, we well know, that to go unto the LORD for this divine and living water, is to go unto his own Word of heavenly truth, wisdom, and life. This is the ever-flowing, over-flowing fountain of living water from Himself. Here, then, may the thirsty soul drink and live; here may he enrich himself with all science, intelligence, and wisdom of a spiritual, heavenly, and eternal nature; and here they who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.‡ In short, the Holy Word of God is the Divine fountain; and the writings of the LORD's servant (E. S.) are provided to open up in our minds new and numerous channels, to receive and convey to us the divine streams from that fountain. Thus are all things of the Word open to, and free for, hungering and thirsting minds, and to them we may go, and take what we want, and spiritually eat, and drink, and live!

And now, my brethren, if you do not feel thus hungry and thirsty, I fear your spiritual health is not good; go, then, to the Great Physician with confession and supplication, that he may heal you, and inspire you with new desires and aspirations after truth and goodness, so that you may be constantly looking upward with humble, ardent, and thirsting minds for illumination into the sacred contents of the Holy Word, that you may constantly drink of the water of life and live for ever! And may you so delight in it as the eternal and infinite fountain of all divine truth, light, and wisdom, that the LORD may make his promised new covenant with you, and "put his law in your inward parts, and write his Word in your hearts;" that he may be your God, in the highest sense of the word, and you his faithful, loving,

* Psalm xlii. 1, 2.

† John vii. 37, 38. See also John iv. 14, and Rev. xxii. 17.

‡ Matt. v. 6.

obedient and happy people for ever.* And may we all, as the early recipients of the eternal truth in its spiritual sense and superior glory, "Refrain our feet from every evil way, that we may keep the LORD's Word."† For "blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it."‡

SECTION XXVIII.

A CAUTION AGAINST AN EVIL LIFE OF SIN, AND AN EXHORTATION TO A LIFE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It will be seen by the readers of this volume, that my remarks are directed to the life, conduct, and deportment of New Church Christians. I have noticed, that when our friends meet together occasionally, the conversation has usually turned upon the wonderful discoveries, the deep subjects, and recondite mysteries of the New Dispensation, but scarcely ever upon the co-operation, and the practical application of truth to the life and conduct of the professor. Now I conceive it equally necessary to converse upon the application of Divine truths to the life and conduct. But when I have occasionally made this remark, the reply has been of this kind: "No, Sir, the doctrines and subjects themselves will have this effect, and be quite sufficient to direct and influence the life and conduct." But surely this reply is incorrect. Neither doctrines nor truths, nor both united, will have any such effect. This idea is too nearly akin to the common doctrine of salvation by faith alone, the professors of which doctrine absurdly affirm, that truth, or faith, will produce good works, which is as much as to say, that the fruit of a tree is produced by its leaves. A man is a man from his love, and not from his knowledge; consequently, love must be the root of the human tree, the leaves of which are the things of faith, and the fruit the good works proceeding from a loving root. It must be somewhat above doctrine and truth, even that which is the essence, the life of doctrine and truth, which is necessary to produce a happy effect in the conduct of man; and that somewhat is good, or love. All doctrine and truth without this, is

* Jer. xxxi. 32.

† Psalm cxix. 101.

‡ Luke xi. 28.

ineffectual, cold, and unproductive, like the light in winter which is without heat, when nothing grows or is fruitful. And here is the sad mistake of some who profess the doctrines of the New Church. They have got the science or knowledge of her doctrines and truths; they are pleased with them; they can talk intelligently about them, and profess them, but here they rest; or if they advance farther, it is too often into the regions of self-derived intelligence and speculative imaginations, where they build castles in the air, which having no foundation on reality, presently vanish away, and leave them without a habitation, or any solid ground to rest upon. Such aerial flights never answer any good purpose. There is nothing like feeling the feet firm on the solid ground of a good and useful life. I do therefore most sincerely wish, that when New Church professors meet together in private conversation, they would turn their minds, not merely to doctrine, truth, and deep arcana, but also to the real life of these things—to application, co-operation, true righteousness, and the happy experience of the spiritual, and heaven-born Christian. Then will they edify, encourage, and animate each other, and not only shew each other the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem, each of which is one bright pearl, but also assist each other in that life and conduct by which they shall be prepared to enter in, and enjoy the felicities of the holy city for ever! I know, indeed, there are great difficulties in the way of our friends bringing into their social meetings such a state of mind as I could wish, arising from the character of the worldly influences which, during the day, have been active around them, but still it is desirable, as every one must confess, to surmount those influences as far as possible.

There are some striking passages of the Word which particularly relate to the present dispensation and Church, which I shall now cite. "Thy people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever."*—"And they shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the LORD."† "This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy; behold this is the law of the house."‡ And in the Revelation of John, where he describes the New Jerusalem (representing symbolically the New Church in all the grandeur, excellence, perfection, Divine order, and beauty of a heaven-descended Church), he calls it

* Isa. lx. 21.

† Isa. lxii. 12.

‡ Ezek. xliii. 12.

the HOLY CITY, the NEW JERUSALEM, descending out of heaven from God. In the same chapter he gives, or rather the LORD gives by him, the solemn warning, that the "fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Again, in the next chapter, "There shall in no wise enter into the city any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life; for WITHOUT are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."* Now, my brethren, I ask you, is it possible to read these passages, believing them to be the LORD's Divine and eternal truths, without plainly perceiving what must be the character, life, and conduct, of all those who are the subjects of this holy Church, or symbolical city? If we make all the allowance we possibly can in the spirit of long-suffering charity, must we not still conclude, that any member of the New Church who, nevertheless, lives in the habit and practice of any known positive evil, is, in reality, no true citizen of the New Jerusalem? There are cases, no doubt, of well-disposed persons being unwarily overcome by sudden excitement, or propelled by some natural propensity—some strong concupiscence of the depraved proprium to commit an evil, which, when reason returns, immediately causes much compunction of mind, and deep and real concern, with a determination to be more watchful against it in future; but there is an immense difference between this temporary fall, and the constant habit and deliberate practice of what is known to be evil, in which the natural man, from delight in it, chooses to indulge himself. The former fault very sincere minds may possibly be hurried into, and will severely regret; but the latter is not the spot of the LORD's people, it is the pollution of an unrenewed heart. But perhaps the question may arise, "Can any member of the New Church habitually live in known evils?" Alas! my brethren, such characters, more or less, are to be found in all Christian denominations. We can only lament that any stain or reproach should arise to the Church, from the conduct of such external and unsanctified professors. And while we lament this, it is our indispensable duty to do all in our power, individually and unitedly, to prevent it in future. But possibly their evils may

* See Rev. xxi. xxii.

be concealed from, and therefore not be noticed by the society with which they are connected, nevertheless they are all perfectly known to the heart-searching LORD, and their defiled internal is seen by the angels! While they are conversing piously upon the divine subjects of our holy dispensation, and with apparent zeal in their behalf, the sin that dwells in their hearts, and is the object of their ruling love, defiles and pollutes every word proceeding from their tongue! While they are outwardly doing good actions and performing uses, those actions and uses are contaminated by the infernal lust of iniquity secretly indulged, and the apparent good is like the fruit of Sodom, fair and ruddy without, but within full of dust and stench! While they are in external worship, offering up prayers and praises at the same time that vile concupiscences reign within, ready to break forth, and be indulged upon the first convenient occasion, their prayers and praises,—to use the language of the prophet,—are a stink in the nostrils of Jehovah.

It is plain that those who know the divine verities of the LORD's Word and kingdom, profess them, and join the Church, while at the same time their hearts are unrenewed and their lives iniquitous, stand in more imminent danger than all other persons; because they are not deceived or led astray by the false doctrines of faith alone, vicarious sacrifice, imputed righteousness, or fancied election unconditional and unchangeable. They know the eternal principles, doctrines, truths, and life which are essential to salvation and eternal happiness. They know the LORD's will, but do it not. They profess his will and not only forbear to do it, but act and live directly contrary to it. They appear to stand as members of the LORD's Church, but actually belong to the opposite kingdom, and are members of some infernal society! Hence, it is evident that "they must be beaten with many stripes." And yet these unhappy persons know to a certainty, that in a very short period they will be called to enter into the world of spirits, and that then, if their ruling love be not changed, if their lives have been, and are, iniquitous, they cannot see the kingdom of heaven! They must, and will, for ever associate with infernal spirits, be the victims of their tyranny, and descend into that lake which for ever burneth with fire and brimstone,—endure the ceaseless pain of burning unsatisfied lusts, and the tormenting insanity of falsehood. How awful is the state of such characters!

How much it is to be lamented that there should be even one such to pervert, defile, and profane the sacred truths, the holy doctrines, the divine subjects of this glorious dispensation! If any one of this description should read these pages, my heart most devoutly prays he may truly see and feel the dreadful state in which he stands. Here the unfaithful professor has every opportunity and means to return to the LORD and seek his mercy. Here we may be humble instruments of use to such, by advice, exhortation, and earnest entreaty! Here the door of mercy stands open to their souls! But when confirmed in an evil state, and they enter into the other world, then the means are over; we can do them no good. The door of mercy is shut against them by themselves; and the cry of "LORD! LORD!" will be in vain. "Depart from me, I know you not," is the soul-piercing reply. How distressing is the thought that the light of heaven should thus shine in vain around an immortal spirit in his state of probation, in the superior splendour of the New dispensation, opening to him his internal state, his connection with the hells, the dreadful consequences of all iniquity, the divine mercy manifested to him, the God of heaven heaven bending down to his relief and deliverance, so that he beholds the eternal worlds laid open, the heavens themselves exhibited, angels inviting him to their blissful abodes, and the divine truths and goods of the holy Word shining upon him, directing his feet, and like so many seraphs of light and love ready to prepare him for, and guide him to, the eternal kingdom of unspeakable beatitude, delight, and everlasting life! And notwithstanding these aboundings of Divine mercy and compassion, this infinite condescension of love, the besotted, foolish, ungrateful, captivated soul chooses to indulge his iniquities, cherish his bitter foes, and plunge himself into never-ending shame, misery, and woe! May the Spirit of the Most High give a blessing to these painful observations! And if there be any amongst us of the above character and life, my devout prayer is, that they may see and feel their awful state—return to the LORD Jesus with all their heart and soul, and find mercy and forgiveness and renovation at his hands!

Now, my serious Christian brethren, I think you will perceive the great necessity there is for us not only to live consistently with our superior mercies ourselves, but also to say and do all in our power to encourage and prevail upon others united with us, to live in the same manner. In whatever situation we

stand, as members of the LORD's New Church, there is one straight line of conduct equally binding upon all. The principles of that conduct are love, charity, and faith; and the example for that conduct is the LORD Jesus Christ Himself when in our nature here below. The laws of that conduct are laid before us in that infallible code we properly call a divine revelation; and a further stimulus to that conduct is given in the luminous writings of the LORD's messenger, the herald of the second Advent. If we truly and spiritually possess the New Church principles of life, it will be our care to follow strictly and faithfully the blessed example the LORD has set us. The snares of the world, the maxims of men, or the bias of our proprium, we shall not urge as a plea or excuse for impropriety or disorder; but from a holy resolution and zeal flowing from pure love, and encouraged by the LORD's gracious promise of his all-sufficient aid, we shall esteem it an honour, not a reproach, to be accounted singular for the righteousness and purity of our lives, knowing by experience that righteousness and purity constitute the essential elements of real happiness! The laws and precepts of the Holy Word will not be deemed by us as impossible to be kept, or hard to obey; because those laws will be engraven upon our hearts, and we shall say with David, "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day!" Every law will be to us righteous, just, and good; the very charter of our happiness! As such the divine commandments will be most easy, yea, most desirable and delightful; and whatever is opposite to them, most hateful! Moreover, when with these principles, this example, and these holy laws, we take into consideration the wonderful light and love, the astonishing intelligence we have received concerning the LORD HIMSELF, the soul, the future state, and the heavens of inconceivable felicity and glory, how must we rise above, and utterly despise and abhor the follies, vanities, impurities, and disorders of this sinful world! And how must our spirits be animated to pursue the plain, the straight, and the sure path to those heavens which are in a manner visible to our intellectual eyes, in their captivating glory and excellence! Surely these delightful considerations should stimulate and propel us forward to imitate our LORD; to obey his most holy and easy laws, deny ourselves of whatever is displeasing to Him and injurious to ourselves, knowing that nothing unclean can enter into the holy city! And as the whole limit of the city round about, within and

without, is most holy, so shall we zealously and delightfully labour to be of the like description and character, being "truly and strictly righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameless."* O that every one of us may thus "labour and give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; for if we do these things we shall never fall."† Then shall we honour our most holy LORD, do credit to his own cause, be useful to others, set a good example, and be daily advancing in the regenerate life and approximating nearer to the angelic state, enjoy a more blessed conjunction with Jesus Christ, be truly happy in ourselves, and preparing, under the divine influences, for the unspeakable felicity, uses, and glories of the New heavens!

Be it then, my brethren, our constant care and the delight of our souls, to live consistently with the unspeakable mercies we enjoy. As this is the most holy city—the most pure Church—the most glorious dispensation ever known to man, so may we become, if we are so disposed, the most upright, righteous, orderly, and holy Christians in the world! And that we may promote this blessed state in ourselves, and in one another, let us inculcate this holy and blessed life, converse upon it, and take every opportunity to recommend it, seeing the necessity there is to do so in the sad state of the world around us; ever bearing in mind that doctrines, truths, knowledge, faith in them, and professions of them, all put together, will never bring us to heaven without a good Christian and spiritual life. To impress these important subjects upon my readers, I shall conclude in the words of Jesus Christ our God; "And behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his works shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city; for without are dogs and sorcerers, and whoremongers and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches!"‡

* Luke i. 6.

† 2 Peter i. 10.

‡ Rev. xxii. 12—16.

SECTION XXIX.

DETRACTION, EVIL SPEAKING, AND DEFAMATION.

I TRUST that such despicable evils as these will not very frequently be found amongst professing members of the New Church, since her doctrines and principles stand in such direct opposition to every thing of the kind. Nevertheless, there may be evil speakers, even under the present dispensation. "It must needs be that offences come," is a divine assurance not likely to become inoperative for many generations. There appears to be a certain disposition in human nature in its fallen state, which cannot bear another person to be spoken well of. Every degree of respect and esteem manifested towards a neighbour or a friend, is to the unhappy subject of "base envy that withers at another's joy, and hates that excellence it cannot reach," a severe mortification. The pride of their own poor corrupt hearts is such, that notwithstanding their inferiority as to character, talents, and uses, they anxiously covet an unmerited exaltation, and have no objection to elevate themselves, as they vainly hope to do, upon the degradation of their neighbour, and the ruin of his good name in society.

This evil disposition, like every other, must be an abuse of some good. It would seem that the Creator has implanted in every one who receives truth in any degree, a disposition to apply it. Now we find that the merely scientific receiver of truth, in acting from this impulse, applies, or rather misapplies the truth, to pass judgment on others, whether truly or falsely, instead of applying the truth, as was intended by the Giver of it, to condemn his own evils, and to guide him to put them away. But he who receives the truth in the love of it, earnestly applies the truth to search out and condemn his own evils; and unlike the merely scientific receiver who seems to find pleasure in the condemnation of others, he never enters on the exposure of faults in others except as a duty, and then with reluctance and pain. Thus one party uses, and the other abuses, the implanted disposition to apply truth to the discrimination of moral qualities, good or evil; one party turning it into a means of good to himself and others; and the other turning it into a means of injury to himself and others.

In all religious communities, certain persons have always

been found who are particularly prone to depreciate, lessen, and throw a shade over the character of others as virtuous and upright as themselves, or more so. And what is also to be lamented, others are too apt to listen to discourse of this nature. So we may say, as is said of the dishonest,—"If there were no receivers there would be no thieves,"—if there were none to hear what defamers have to say, there would be no defamers. When any one mentions what is prejudicial to the character of another, unless you are convinced he is speaking the real truth, and not from prejudice or ill-nature, but from a pure and just motive of real good and use, it would be well to turn a deaf ear to him, for this would prove an effectual way to silence the tongue of detraction. When detractors are not encouraged to speak ill of another, but receive such a proper and appropriate check, perhaps they may then learn to speak well of them, instead of ill, and this will indeed be a great point gained. There really are persons who either from hereditary disposition, or acquired habit, are so accustomed to this hurtful practice, as to do it without considering the consequences or the evil nature of it. And while others hear them with attention, and manifest no disapprobation, they give a sanction to the conduct, encourage the speaker, and become partakers of the evil. So that if it be—as it certainly is—a very great fault uselessly to speak ill of another, it also is a great fault to sit and hear it without giving a check to it in some way or other. But, nevertheless, it must be confessed, that there are occasions, when it is necessary to give information of another's delinquencies, in order to warn those who would otherwise suffer from them. If this were not done, society and individuals would become a prey to the wicked, who would triumph in the impunity that such misplaced lenity would afford them. It is, however, the sacred duty of every one to take care that he never speaks ill of another but from the necessity of the case, and only for the sake of use.

Every honest and upright man's character is to him a jewel beyond all price, and he who robs him of that is guilty of a most cruel theft; nay more, it is a kind of spiritual murder. We will not suppose any professed member of our holy Church can deliberately be guilty of an evil so great. But that we may carefully and religiously avoid every thing that bears a resemblance of this injurious conduct, let us constantly remember, that the essential principle with us, is Charity, or the loving our neighbour as ourselves. Now, whenever or wherever this love

is in exercise and prevails, there you will not hear one word of evil speaking, detraction, or defamation. If I love my neighbour as myself, I shall be as tenacious of his character and reputation as of my own; and I never yet heard of any one who endeavoured to injure his own character. Let every one who hopes to "ascend into the holy hill" of Charity, take heed how he "backbites with his tongue, or takes up a reproach against his neighbour."* Let every one labour and strive to see the evil of which I have been speaking, in all its parts and degrees, bearings and consequences, in its true and proper light. And if there be a disposition in any one either to a careless kind of speaking disrespectfully of others, or to the hearing of it, be it his care to avoid it in future; suppress it in others; and ever shew a marked disapprobation of every thing of the kind. It would be endless to enter upon the ill consequences of it; the injury it does in religious society, the uneasiness and pain it gives to worthy Christians, and how offensive it is to the LORD. Upon this subject the wise king of Israel has said a great deal in little compass, and excellently adapted,—“He that hateth, dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him. When he speaketh fair, believe him not; for there are seven abominations in his heart. His hatred is covered by deceit, but his wickedness shall be shewed before the congregation. Whoso diggeth a pit, shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him. A lying tongue hateth those who are afflicted by it, and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.”† From these words, we learn that detraction, evil speaking, and defamation have more or less attached to them hatred, dissimulation, deceit, wickedness, lying, flattery, and seven abominations! And, if so, in what a horrid and infernal light does the evil appear! And, nevertheless, how ready are too many professed Christians to give into it, without considering its nature or consequences. In fact it is thus, not only with this evil, but *almost every* other, people do not properly reflect that in all evil, public or secret, more atrocious or less so, there is somewhat of hell, of death and destruction! They know not apparently, as our author teaches, that “all evil is to be shunned because it is of and from the Devil.” And as in every good, the very least good, of the LORD’s kingdom, there are a thousand beatitudes and delights treasured up, so, in the least evil of the infernal kingdom, there are a thousand miseries and sorrows!

* Psalm. xv.

† Pro. xxvi. 24—28.

With what earnestness and fervour should we then adopt the words of Divine inspiration, as delivered by David, and say of all evils, "I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting!"* May we then, as sincere and spiritual Christians of the LORD's new and ever-blessed kingdom, constantly live in the exercise and under the influence of that DIVINE CHARITY "which suffereth long, and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."† Then shall we be as tender of our neighbour's character as of our own; and in this case all detraction, envy, evil-speaking, and defamation will be given back to their own polluted and dark abodes! Tranquillity, harmony, and peace will reign in the Church. Friend will be united to friend, brother to brother, constituting a family of pure and confiding love; and the God of peace and love will be with us for ever!

SECTION XXX.

ENTHUSIASM.

The pursuit of religious and spiritual knowledge is commendable; and when sought in order that such knowledge may be reduced to practice, the pursuit of it is spiritually and eternally useful. To make use of all suitable means and opportunities to acquire such knowledge, appears, therefore, to be an important duty. But as the best things are sometimes perverted to the worst purposes, so it is necessary for us to guard against every degree and kind of perversion. I shall therefore submit to my brethren a few thoughts upon enthusiasm, a heated imagination, and fanciful ideas. Of all men the members of the New Church should be the last to become enthusiastic, our author having so clearly warned us of the cunning wiles of those enthusiastic spirits who delight in making men as great enthusiasts as themselves.

* Psalm cxxxix. 22, 23, 24.

† 1st Cor. xiii. 4—8.

It is well known that there have been members of the Church—men of learning, science, and apparently strong intellect—who nevertheless have given into extravagant ideas, enthusiastic conceptions, and wild reveries of imagination; who not being satisfied with being wise by what is written, have pretended to be wise above what is written, and by artful reasoning from the natural man, have fascinated others. Thus the most irrational and enthusiastic sentiments have been dignified and represented as sublime and elevated truths above the conception of common understandings, and the speculative author of them was supposed by some to be (as no doubt he supposed himself) an oracle of superior wisdom and heavenly intelligence. Such characters conceive themselves vastly superior to other men, their self-derived intelligence having, in their own imagination, elevated them to the third heaven, and they look down with proud compassion upon the sober, rational Christiana who prefers the slow and sure course, as deluded by error, walking in darkness, knowing not whither he goes, and obstinately refusing the superior illumination which this fancied oracle of wisdom could communicate to his inferior mind. Whenever we hear of any person who has received the doctrines pretending to understand the writings of our author better than any other men, or that he is himself equally enlightened as, or even more so than, our heaven-taught teacher, we may venture to conclude such a man has elevated himself into the wild regions of self-derived intelligence. His head has become giddy by the height to which he has soared; and it is a thousand to one that he soon falls from his exalted station into the mire of absurdity, the dregs of error, or is found raving in the jungles of insanity! Such characters connect themselves with disorderly and enthusiastic spirits in the world of spirits, receive their influx, and willingly enter into all their delusions. We very seldom find that such men ever return to sound, sober reason, plain truth, humility of mind, and the pure teaching of the divine Word and Spirit of their God and Saviour. So awfully dangerous is it to give into enthusiastic, wild, extravagant, and fantastic sentiments, while professedly under a dispensation of pure spiritual and rational truth, like that we at present enjoy. And whatever our opponents may say to the contrary, we are quite sure that our principles, doctrines, and truths stand at the utmost distance from all kinds of enthusiasm, wild reveries, and fantastic imaginations. They lead us

to a firm and solid faith in the LORD and his Word, and to a pure spiritual love, and these supersede and disown all fanciful and groundless communications. Such a love and faith must elevate us into that divine heat and light, which is as far superior to the illusive will o' the wisps of imaginary spiritual dictates and fancies, as heaven is high above the earth. But, nevertheless, while we are in the world, and during temptations have to pass through the hells, and while infernal and enthusiastic spirits who aspire to be "as gods," are so active to draw us into any thing which has a tendency to divert us from the straight road, to injure our states, and if possible, to destroy our souls, we have great cause to watch against all their foolish but dangerous devices, and keep close to the plain truth, the sound faith, and the pure love of the rational, enlightened, and solid Christian!

There are two descriptions of persons more especially subject to enthusiasm, fantasy, and delusion,—weak uncultivated minds on the one hand; and on the other, men of strong wills, joined with strong intellects, improved by science.—Persons of either class are more especially liable to delusion when they receive the doctrines only in the understanding, and under the influence of the affections of the natural man, unbroken and unprepared by true penitence and humiliation of heart. The man of a weak, uncultivated mind, is easily seduced by the influx of disorderly spirits, to believe their suggestions and dictates to be from heaven. Once allowed to gain possession of his understanding, his will soon follows the deception, and he begins to conceive wonderful things in his mind; bows with reverence to his deceivers; and almost adores them as deities, until he admits falsehood for truth, imagination for enlightened reason, and possibly thinks he sees angels, hears voices, is much in the world of spirits, is wiser, and more highly favoured than his fellows! But all the while he is actually absorbed in mere fantasy and delusion, and led captive by the enemies of his soul! Such things have been; and what has been may happen again. Let us take warning from experience.

The man of strong will and intellect improved by science, who has not passed through states of genuine repentance, and is not so humbled as to receive the divine verities of the heavenly kingdom in a reformed and regenerate state of mind, is also susceptible of delusion; because, entertaining a high opinion of his own understanding, proud of his science and learning.

and emulous of distinction and authority, he is easily seduced by the influx of his enthusiastic spiritual associates, into the pride of self-derived intelligence, conceiving himself superior to others, and the best qualified to teach, dictate, and rule. Hence he may attempt to strike out some new path; form a system of doctrine of his own; explain it in obscure terms and metaphysical jargon; and at length, elated with his own imaginary wisdom, what he first taught in hesitation and doubt, he now believes and confirms as the highest truth, and deems himself far wiser than other men. Whereas in reality his intellect is run wild; he soars into the delusive regions of fantasy; his head turns giddy with self-elevation; and so far from our wondering that he thinks himself the wisest of men, and all others foolish, we need not be surprised should he deem himself all but a god, and expect his disciples to adore him!*

May every New Church Christian carefully guard against every degree of delusion, fantasy, and enthusiastic imagination, and thus guard against the devices of infernal spirits, who are ever active to deceive and to destroy. Let him make the Word of truth his rule; be humble; and instead of self-exaltation or the boast of superior wisdom, let him labour to become as a little child in humility, innocence, teachableness, and purity; for true wisdom dwells with innocence; and we know that only the humble can be divinely exalted. Let us be satisfied with the heavenly principles of love and charity; contented to live by faith, and anxious only to prepare our souls for that open spiritual communication, and that spiritual company, and exaltation to honour, to which we trust the LORD our God will see good to elevate us, when we enter the world of spirits. Till then may we be content to walk in the vale of humility, and deem it the highest wisdom and honour we can obtain, to love our only LORD, and faithfully walk in the path of his commandments, for this is the only safe road, and assuredly ends in bliss eternal!

* See a relation in the *Universal Theology*, No. 661, shewing the dreadful consequence of enthusiasm and self-derived intelligence, when they have gained the full dominion.

SECTION XXXI.

THE PRINCIPLES FROM WHICH THE THINGS OF THIS LIFE
ARE PURSUED; AND THE TOO GREAT ANXIETY TO
OBTAIN THEM.

THIS world is not our home. "Here we have no continuing city."* We are "strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were."† Consequently we are on our journey, travelling through wildernesses and deserts, hills and mountains, plains and valleys, rocks and rugged roads, all which, if we steadily travel on, under the same guide as led the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, will be passed over with safety, and bring us to our true home, our own happy country, and our everlasting residence there. If then we are only upon a journey, that journey an important one, and if at the end of it our eternal state, our everlasting residence, will be unalterably fixed, either in misery or happiness, it should seem that there is not any thing in the world through which we travel, independently of this journey, of sufficient consequence to engage our warm affections, or captivate our hearts. For however pleasing and desirable any thing may appear, it is but transient, and continues, as it were, but for a moment; it is lost almost as soon as possessed; and while in possession, it gives not the happiness expected; it is embittered by a thousand cares and disappointments; and at best, it is like the sweet-scented beautiful rose which charms the eye and regales the sense, but is accompanied with thorns which may wound the flesh; and how soon it fades, and its fragrance is gone! Experience testifies to the truth of this observation, and every Christian traveller will confirm the fact. But, however pleasing the objects of this world may be, and allowing they would give ten thousand times more pleasure than they ever have done, or ever will, how inconsistent and how vain would it be to fix our ruling love upon them, while at the same time we are assured they will soon disappear, and, to us, be lost for ever. There is not any thing in this world that can reasonably claim the ruling love of man, because there is not any thing that can give a true and primary or satisfying happiness to man, no not for a day, an hour, or a moment. True happiness dwells in another

* Heb. xiii. 14.

† Heb. xi. 13.

world, to which we are going, and there it is neither uncertain nor transient, but perfect in its nature, and durable in its existence, even to all eternity; and our souls, which belong to that world, partake of its happiness in part here, just so far as we are prepared to enjoy it in fulness hereafter. As, then, we are passing through this world to an eternal one, it will be expedient for us to examine seriously, and properly determine, what principle it is from which we act, in our pursuit of the things which belong to this present world and life.

There are two principles, from one or the other of which all men act and live: the one is a principle confined to self and this world,—the other is extended to our neighbour and a superior world. To explain the nature of these principles at length is not my intention, as they are clearly explained in the writings of our author. But known as they are, it is but too evident that we are very prone to act and live from the inferior principle, namely, the love of self and this world. And so long as this love bears rule, all things of the mind are in disorder; happiness is sought for in vain; and the true ground of it is unknown. Let us then suppose that, as rational beings and members of society, we are active, industrious, and useful in our employment, business, occupation, or office, in which we are placed by divine Providence; and that we engage in these, not only with activity, care, and attention, but also in an honest, punctual, and orderly manner. In this case we may conclude all is well and right; we are useful in the world, respectable in society, and doing our duty to ourselves and to all men. But here let a well-instructed New Church Christian step in, and he will say, "All this is right and good in itself; you are useful in the world, but let me ask, What is your real end in all this? From what motive or principle do you act and do all these things?" Perhaps the reply may run thus: "Why for the support of myself and family, that I may acquire property, appear respectable in the world, and not only enjoy the good things of life, but provide for ease and comfort in advanced age at a future day. This is my motive and the end I have in view." "And have you no higher motive and end than this?" "What higher should I have? what end can be superior to this, to engross my industry, labour, and care?" "Is it possible you have no better motive! Why then you are governed by the love of self and the world; your motive and your end centre in self alone; the origin and spring of all unhappiness!"

Now, my brethren, let us reflect upon this state for a moment. Our author justly observes, that all acts of use, civil and moral, done from self, or from worldly, temporal, and selfish motives and ends, are of no avail as to our final happiness, because in them there is no good from the LORD, no spiritual life; they are tainted with numberless evils, proceed from a corrupt proprium, and are defiled by the unclean principle which gives them birth, and by the selfish end for which they are done. Although, then, they may be useful to others, and to the man himself, as to this life and the present object he has in view, nevertheless as to his spiritual state, and the life to come, they are all dead things, and to death they tend. It will be well therefore to consider, that when we act and live from merely natural motives and ends, our ruling love is in the things of this world and time, such as prosperity, riches, reputation, corporeal and temporal enjoyments. And if our ruling love be in these things, and we feel, or seem to feel, at the same time, an affection for spiritual and eternal things, this ruling love will gradually and effectually diminish the weaker spiritual affection; every spark of it will gradually be extinguished and die; and that love which ought to be under the feet, will obtain supreme and full power, and becoming the head, will govern the whole man, and where that principle governs, all is bondage, anxiety, and death. Moreover, to cure us of this folly, and to wean us from so impure and dangerous a love, let us recollect and bear in mind until it is deeply impressed upon our very hearts, that every thing of a worldly nature, however splendid, fascinating, and desirable to the natural mind,—such as wealth, fine houses, and land, extensive pleasure grounds, esteem and honour, luxurious enjoyments, bodily gratifications, and all that the world can give, laid at our feet, and called our own, cannot be either proper or sufficient objects to bless the soul of man, or give him one hour's substantial and satisfying happiness! They may amuse and gratify the natural mind for an hour or a day; inflate it with pride and consequence; the tongue of adulation may charm the ear; the dependant vassals may bend before the elated mortal as he stands in the midst of surrounding vanities and splendid nothings; all these may glitter to the eye, and fascinate for a moment, but how soon they will pass away, and be seen no more! They cannot contribute any thing to our souls and their eternal states; they cannot contribute a single abiding joy, or promote our lasting welfare and blessed-

ness, either in time or eternity. As therefore we so well know that every thing of the kind is transient and uncertain; must either totally leave us, or we leave them; and that if when we quit the material body, they have been the objects of our ruling love, that love will remain, and being evil in itself, must sink the immortal spirit, the real man, into everlasting disappointment and misery,—if we are so well aware of all this, how can we be so wanting to ourselves, as well as to God, as to give them our best affections! But if as truly reformed and spiritual minds, we are careful, industrious, and useful in all temporal concerns from heavenly motives, by acting under the influence of love to our neighbour and of being useful; considering temporal goods as inferior and subordinate blessings, and loving them in no higher degree than as the gifts of a kind Providence for our comfort and accommodation while passing through this world, and to enable us to perform uses more extensively for the benefit and good of our fellow creatures, then we shall so act and live, that every thing of a worldly and temporal nature will contribute to our spiritual improvement, enhance our true happiness, extend our uses, and enlarge our delights, and so prepare us for the heavens of our God. At the same time, strict honesty, uprightness, and benevolence, will mark our conduct, and the good things of divine Providence will be received and enjoyed with a superior zest, through peace in our own minds, and a confidence of the Lord's approbation. His joy will abide in us and our joy will be full. This, my brethren, is, or should be, the state of life and mind of every professed member of the New Church. I am confident you will acknowledge it should be so, and the excellence, the advantage, and the eternal blessedness of it, is as plain to your understanding as it is to my own. Let, then, a pure spiritual principle of charity, the love of uses, and a desire to promote the happiness of all men, be the essence and source of our conduct, and the spring of our industry, till we pass into the world of spirits, and enter the gates of heaven!

Permit me now to offer a few thoughts upon the "too great anxiety for obtaining the things of this world and time." And here let me beg of you not to allow yourselves to think that I trouble you with remarks upon circumstances of merely minor importance, for when they are viewed in connection with the grand whole, as the various particulars making up, and embodied in, the general system of human happiness, you will see

them in a different light, and feel that they are of essential consequence to your true interests.

It is but too common a case, that very sincere and upright minds, sometimes, no doubt, from peculiar constitutional infirmity, are too much under the influence of anxiety, thought, and concern about temporal things, passing events, and future circumstances. There is in the natural man a strong affection for the good things of this life, and thence a strong desire to obtain them; and as there is much uncertainty in all things of this world, that desire is attended with doubt and fear concerning what may take place. Hence anxiety rests upon and corrodes the mind; and its peace is disturbed by a thousand unavailing and unnecessary thoughts.

The kind advice of our all-providing LORD is little thought of or attended to, when he said, "Take no [anxious] thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* If this injunction were properly regarded in connection with a confiding faith in the LORD's good Providence, the Christian would be far more composed and easy in his mind; more calm in his judgment; and more dispassionate in his conclusions; and for that reason, probably, more prosperous in his temporal concerns. Such would be the natural result of a firm and rational dependance upon divine Providence; and an assurance that in the most minute circumstances of life, as in the greater, Providence orders all things for the present and eternal good of man. But Divine Providence has given no promise of support beyond what is needed for the present day. If therefore we heap upon to-day the apprehended woes of to-morrow (which may never come!), our burden must needs be too heavy, and our strength must fail under it. As the evil of the day is sufficient, so is the strength to meet it sufficient, but not more than sufficient. We shall do well to remember this.

But, alas! we can see these things, and speak pointedly upon them to others, and at the same time we allow ourselves to be perplexed, harassed, and rendered uncomfortable by an unavailing anxiety for the future, which also prevents the enjoyment of the present good; and the blessings of to-day are totally lost in the care for to-morrow. We might just as well distress our minds about what shall or shall not take place twenty years hence, as on the next coming day; one being just as uncertain

* Matt. vi. 34.

to us as the other. But if we would depend upon the goodness of the LORD, trusting in his divine Providence for the future, we should enjoy the present blessings with composure and peace, and be better prepared for any events, favourable or not, which might ensue, well knowing that those events are permitted or ordered by our Heavenly Father, so as in the greatest possible degree to promote our regeneration, and fit us for that eternal state of felicity which shall have no interruption, anxious forebodings, or fear of an end. If, then, we wish to preserve our minds in a state of tranquillity and cheerfulness, be it our care to act in all events and circumstances from a principle of love to God and man, and so as to have a primary regard to what is heavenly and eternal, for the more we do so, the more will the natural man be brought into subjection; the less concerned shall we be about temporal things; to-day we shall share the blessings of Providence with a thankful heart; to-morrow will be quite out of the question, and the corroding viper, anxiety, will be trodden beneath our feet. Of all the bountiful blessings of heaven for which our thanks are due, there is none greater than the blessing of thankfulness. I recollect three circumstances in relation to myself, which have fully convinced me of the folly of over-anxious thought or concern about the future:—the first is, that every blessing I have enjoyed through life, has been altogether from the hand of the LORD;—the second is, that his particular Providence is in and over all things that take place concerning me, and that all are designed to promote my eternal good;—and the third is, that I have an infinitely wise, good, and tender Father, who will not suffer those who trust in Him to want any good, for time or for eternity.—And therefore, to act with care and prudence, content with the present, and depending upon Him for the future, is my duty, my interest, and my peace.

Let us then, my brethren, convince the world by our conduct and temper, that we act from the celestial principles of love and charity; that we are more anxious to promote the good and happiness of our fellow men than about our future condition in this life; and while we are as prudent and industrious as others, that we can depend upon divine Providence for all that is needful in all states and circumstances. Having sought in the first place the kingdom of God and his righteousness, let us not be solicitous about what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed; for our Heavenly Father

knoweth that we have need of these things, and will assuredly supply them in such measure and manner as his unfailing goodness and unerring wisdom shall see meet. So shall we prove that we are indeed the grateful, confiding and obedient children of our Heavenly Father; pass through life resigned and contented; and so be the better disposed to appropriate those spiritual and divine blessings which feed and clothe and enrich the soul, and prepare it for those happy abodes where anxiety never enters, and want is never known!

SECTION XXXII.

THE SEPARATE WORSHIP OF THE NEW CHURCH.

It will be acknowledged that the members of the LORD'S New Church are under the highest obligations to act in all things consistently with their extraordinary mercies; and this, too, in a firm, faithful, and open manner, disregarding all customs, opinions, or censures of men which may stand in their way, and only considering Jesus Christ as their master and LORD. With a zeal and resolution becoming their state and their principles, they should therefore advocate his cause in every possible and orderly way, internally and externally, to the honour of his only adorable name, the success of his kingdom, and the eternal good of mankind. And this they should do without the least simulation, dissimulation, prevarication, or unauthorised accommodation to the religious prejudices, opinions, or customs of a fallen and consummated Church; in all things strictly adhering to the example, the laws, and the plain truths and commandments of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

We find that from the time the LORD ascended to his glory, his apostles and disciples assembled together in his name, and worshiped him agreeably to the doctrines and truths he had taught them. We hear nothing of their continuing members of the temple or synagogue; they kept another sabbath; worshiped another Object, for instead of the invisible they worshipped the VISIBLE JEHOVAH, the LORD JESUS CHRIST; they observed other ordinances; and offered up other sacrifices; the traditions of the Jews gave way to the doctrines of Jesus; the imposing

ceremonies of the Jews to the simple ritual of the gospel; the sacrifice of beasts and birds, to the spiritual sacrifices of the heart; and the splendour of external representatives to the plain, but ardent worship of their Saviour and their God. It has never, I believe, been proved that the disciples of Jesus Christ, after his ascension, ever considered themselves as members of the synagogue, or united in the worship and service of the Jewish sanctuary. So far from this being the case, "When certain men from Judea taught the brethren to be circumcised and keep the laws of Moses, Paul and Barnabas disputed with them against it; they went up to Jerusalem, called the apostles and elders together upon the subject; they reproved those men who would have put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither their fathers nor themselves were able to bear: and they gave it in counsel that as some had troubled the disciples, subverting their souls, saying they must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom no such commandment was given, therefore this council of apostles, elders, and disciples, sent to the different Churches what they had decreed, and informed them that it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and unto themselves, to lay upon them no such burden," &c.* These brave apostles and disciples of their LORD readily taught in the streets of Jerusalem and preached the gospel to the Israelites, but it was in the way the Jews called heresy, that they worshiped Jesus Christ their LORD. Bonds, stripes, and even death, were the lot of some, but they flinched not from their profession, they screened not themselves under the ceremonies and forms of the synagogue, nor professed to be members of a Church which had crucified the Redeemer of the world. Amidst all kinds of opposition, reproach, and evil treatment, Churches arose, the gospel spread, Jesus Christ was preached, and the apostles, disciples, and converts assembled round the standard of their crucified, but now glorified LORD. With resolution and zeal they honoured his adorable Name. Great success attended their faithful exertions, and the blessing of heaven descended upon them as the morning dew. They triumphed over their adversaries, and were crowned with the approbation and favour of that Redeemer and God they were not ashamed or afraid to own, before a sinful and adulterous generation. Such was the conduct of the LORD's followers at his First Advent. They set a noble example to succeeding generations; and shew us in what

* See Acts xv.

manner those faithful men should act, under every dispensation of mercy, who name the Name of Jesus Christ, and profess to be the subjects of his kingdom. When I consider the excellency of the New dispensation, the purity of its truths, the essential importance of its holy doctrines, the mercies we enjoy, the duties incumbent upon us, and the beatitudes and glories we are invited to possess for ever, I cannot but see and feel that we ought to be in principle and in heart, in external life and conduct, the most circumspect, consistent, exemplary, obedient, and orderly Christians in the world. In every work of piety, religion, and morality, we ought to be the most faithful, useful, and spiritual characters, to the honour of our only LORD, the harmony, union, and prosperity of his New Church, and the spiritual benefit of mankind. I cannot but consider that every sincere recipient of our doctrines, is under an obligation to join the open worship of the New Church, if possible, and contribute with heart and hand, body and soul, word and deed, to establish it in the world as a visible external Church of the LORD. By uniting in her worship, service, and ordinances in a regular manner, from sound principles of love, charity, and faith, I cannot doubt that all who do so will bring down upon themselves the choicest blessings of heaven. It is so consistent with all that is conscientious, manly, and becoming, that we should appear before all men what to our fellow recipients we profess to be, and are internally in our consciences, to the honour of our LORD, the prosperity of his cause, and the dissemination of his truth; that so, by our talents, our example, and our lives, we may be a united body of zealous and faithful instruments in blessing mankind with the true knowledge of Jesus Christ; the nature of the worship acceptable to Him; the New kingdom he is setting up; and thus of leading them to the true Shepherd of their souls, that they may appropriate the bread and water of life, and be the happy subjects of his New heavens for ever.

It is impossible to overrate the benefits and blessings to all and each of the members of a separated New Church Society, when the true principles of the Church are permitted to actuate them in their diligent attendance upon worship, and their mutual and effectual co-operation in the support of it in a comfortable and respectable manner. And as for those who would individually prefer to read at home, they would be all the greater gainers by sacrificing their personal inclination at the shrine of duty.

SECTION XXXIII.

DISTINGUISHING THE NEW CHURCH AT ITS COMMENCEMENT
FROM ALL OTHER RELIGIOUS OR CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS.

THE Christian Church in the days of Jesus Christ, his apostles, and disciples, and for a considerable time after, was distinguished from all other religions in the world, not only by their withdrawing from the Jews, their synagogues, ceremonies, false doctrines, and self-pleasing errors; and not merely by the principles, doctrines, and truths they themselves professed; but it was distinguished by the divine and powerful efficacy of those principles, doctrines, and truths upon their conduct and life. Here was the noble, the grand, the ever-visible distinction before the human race of that Church from all others. The example before us in that Church and its primitive members, is highly worthy our imitation. And did we all faithfully take pattern after it, we should indeed "be a city set upon a hill, which could not be hid."* Let us notice their conduct and life a few moments. They were humble and faithful followers of Jesus Christ their LORD, and strict conformists to his Divine laws and precepts. "They walked not in the counsels of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful, but their delight was in the law of the LORD."† "They came out from among the wicked, and touched not the unclean thing, but were holy as bearing the vessels of the LORD."‡—They followed Jesus Christ! They did not frequent taverns and public-houses, and associate with the immoral and the vain. They did not visit theatres, and sit there with the sons and daughters of iniquity to hear the ribaldry so agreeable to the senseless and corrupt! They did not associate at the house of their friend, to idle away their time over games of chance. They did not unite with convivial meetings of intemperance, folly, and noise, turning night into day and day into night. They did not assemble in promiscuous nocturnal dancing, till daylight illumined them home, to rest their surcharged heads, drooping eyes, and weary limbs, through the bright hours of the day. No! we hear nothing of all this among primitive Christians! They were very different characters. They lived very different lives. They took care to shun even every appearance

* Matt. v. 19.

† Psalm i. 2.

‡ Isa. lli. 11.

of evil, and to set an example before the world that should manifest them to be the true and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ,—not of the world, but chosen out of the world, kept from the evil of the world, and determined to avoid all its sins and pollutions, its follies and vanities, and whatever could in the least degree tarnish their garments, or the honour, dignity, and glory of that Church to which they rejoiced to belong. But perhaps you will ask whether “I am going to recommend such a strict and severe conduct to New Church Christians? Truly, my brethren, I am, in respect to all those who earnestly desire to attain “the full and perfect stature of a man in the LORD Jesus.” I have long found that self-denial, and taking up, what at first may be a cross to the natural man, is essential to the true Christian character, and most agreeable to a sound, rational, and scriptural view of the Christian life and conduct.

It will, I presume, be acknowledged by all our professed members, that the LORD's New Church, considered in itself, is the most holy, spiritual, and celestial of any which have existed since the most ancient days. If so, it must certainly stand at the greatest distance from all positive evil, folly, and impropriety of conduct. And standing in this state, it will be eminently distinguished from all other denominations and religions; because, it will then appear in its own character and its own dress,—“prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”* “The whole limits thereof round about being most holy.”† Such being the character and the state of this Church, I would ask,—is it not expedient and necessary that the subjects of it in this its primitive days, should be as circumspect as the subjects of the Christian Church, when in its primitive state? Should we not equally avoid every folly, vanity, and appearance of evil? Is it seemly, decorous, and quite in character for the subjects of this holy, spiritual, and heavenly Church to indulge in the impure follies, questionable amusements, and defiling customs of this depraved and iniquitous generation? Should not each sincere disciple be ready to say, do I not profess the most holy principles, the most pure doctrines, and call myself a member of that Church which stands at an immense distance from all impurity and disorder? And is it seemly, is it decorous, in me, as a member of this holy Church, to be noticed and marked by serious and religious characters of other denominations, as one who resembles mere men of the world, frequenting

* Rev. xxi. 2.

† Eze. xliii. 12

assemblies, and running greedily after pleasures and amusements such as they find congenial to their impure, unintellectual, and grovelling tastes? Is this the way for me to distinguish the LORD's New Church as the most intellectual, pure, orderly, and spiritual of all churches? Will religious and pious characters be attracted by my conduct, or be induced by my example, to inquire into our holy doctrines and truths, and so become members of the same Church? Is not my unguarded, vain, and unbecoming conduct, likely to disgust any man who values consistency, and cause him to conclude very unfavourably of our Church and our religion? Nevertheless, I profess charity; I desire and wish others to receive the blessings I receive, and enjoy the mercies I enjoy; but in this case, by my words I invite others to the Church, and by my conduct I drive them away!" So did not apostles and primitive Christians. They could deny themselves for the good of others; surely, then, we must not indulge ourselves to the eternal injury of others.

Surely, it should never be said of a New Church Christian, "To-day he meets in religious worship; adores the LORD; repeats his Divine laws; receives instructions from his Word; and converses upon spiritual and Divine subjects; but to-morrow, he associates with the irreligious multitude; joins them in their vain and idle amusements; appears as one of them, a member of their fraternity! This cannot be the way for our Church to be distinguished in the world as superior to all other Churches and all other religions. It is not thus that the mountain of the "LORD's house, in these last days, is to be established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills."*

My brethren, it is not our doctrine or our principles by which we must be distinguished in the world, for these are not known; they are not read and studied; but it must be the EFFECT of those principles and doctrines in our life and conduct; in our example before men, whereby the Church must be distinguished. And do we not profess charity, or to love our neighbour as ourselves? It was the remark of the Pagans on observing the conduct of the primitive Christians, "See, how these Christians love one another!" and should not New Church Christians be found deserving of a like estimation from those around them? Are we zealous for the LORD's cause, and anxious to bring thousands more into the LORD's kingdom? Then shall we not deny ourselves of all even apparently impure indulgencies,

* Isa. ii. 2

although sanctioned by the customs of the age, for the sake of doing good, setting a good example, and promoting the eternal good of mankind? Alas, if we did not, we should be far below the primitive disciples of what we deem a less perfect dispensation than our own. If our doctrines be really so superior, should not our tastes be equally superior? if not, we have good reason to fear that we are very little the better for our doctrines; being as yet, more like external men than internal, more worldly-minded than heavenly-minded.

EXAMPLE, my Brethren, MUST distinguish the New Church—a circumspect, holy, self-denying example. This alone can set our Jerusalem upon the elevated mountain! And if we are truly spiritual, regenerate subjects of our most holy Church, we shall feel no difficulty in refraining from all those things in external conduct which have the appearance of evil, and more or less of impurity. In fact we shall have no taste for them. We shall feel them altogether beneath our regard. If we truly love our neighbour; if we love the Church; and if we love the LORD, the vain amusements and follies of a corrupt world will be insipid, tasteless, unpleasant, or even disgusting, and it will not be compulsion, but choice to avoid them all. Where is the true and faithful, the internal member of the New Church, who is not very desirous that his example and conduct in life should be such as to convince all around him that the Church to which he belongs is the most glorious and heavenly of all that ever appeared? Therefore such internal members of the LORD's Church—and no others are more than external members, not yet weaned from the delights of “the old man which is corrupt after the deceitful lusts,”—such internal members will not only consider how unseemly, and quite out of character the conduct is which I have deprecated, and also what an example should be set before men; but also that from principle the New Church Christian will avoid all the above named impurities. His new life's-love sets him as far above them as heaven is above earth. He loves nothing but what is good, and pure, and heavenly! The vain follies, sensual indulgences, and impure customs of this world belong to a kingdom to which he is now a stranger. They are under the government of a prince to whom he will pay no allegiance,—“the prince of this world,” against whom he is at perpetual war. This is the New Church Christian! Bring all such together; separate from them every one who does not answer to this

character; and then shall the New Church be distinguished in the world for its purity, its excellence, and its glory above all others, and like the LORD in some degree when he was lifted up, it will draw all men into it—all who are in good, or thirsting for truth! The New Church is to be a Church in divine order. Now, I conceive all divine order proceeds from a divine origin, even from Jehovah in his Divine Humanity, our LORD Jesus Christ, and I do not think worldly and sensual vanities have the least connection with divine order. Where divine order rules, every thing is good, pure, useful, and calculated to bless mankind. Divine order has divine laws; and divine laws lead to an orderly, righteous, heavenly conduct and life. It seems, then, that New Church Christians should be the most orderly men in the world; or how can they be in reality New Church Christians? Behold, then, that the true order of our Church requires, that it be distinguished above all other religions, in every thing, from its first principles to its ultimate manifestations. To this I may add another, although inferior reason, that the same is equally demanded by our self-interest; a consideration likely to operate powerfully with even the natural-rational mind. But how is self-interest connected with the strict and particular conduct recommended? I answer, every thing that is inconsistent with the divine order, laws, and purity of the LORD's kingdom is prejudicial to man; consequently, all activities, customs, habits, and gratifications, which are congenial to his corrupt proprium, have a natural and powerful tendency to strengthen and foster his depraved loves, retard his spiritual progress, more or less defile his mind, and damp, if not extinguish, the flame of celestial love and charity; at the same time he is in danger, through the seductive character of such courses, of sinking into vice and disorder, and thus losing his character for respectability with men of business, and all who justly connect worldly prosperity with a prudent deportment. The LORD, knowing the state of human beings, with the ill consequences arising from indulging the proprium, has therefore repeatedly and affectionately called upon us to deny ourselves, avoid every appearance of evil, and follow him in the regeneration; doing as he did, walking as he walked, and shunning what he avoided. This assuredly we must do, in order that our regeneration may correspond with his glorification. If then we consult our own true, spiritual, eternal, and even our temporal interests; the prosperity of the Church; the good of

our fellow immortals; and the honour of our divine LORD; we shall in all things make it our study, care, and delight to have the New Church visibly and properly distinguished in the world,—especially so far as we are individually concerned,—as, above all others, the most pure, holy, and heavenly Church of Jesus Christ our God, accounting it a shame unto us if we are in anywise less distinguished than the Christian Church was in its primitive days, for all that should “make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

SECTION XXXIV.

THE TRUE AND GENUINE RELIGION OF NEW CHURCH CHRISTIANS.

THE religion of the New Church is neither more nor less than the full resignation of our own wills to the will of Jesus Christ our God. In other words, it demands that our ruling love be such as to find no pleasure, delight, satisfaction or happiness in any thing whatsoever but that which is of God and his kingdom, or is in perfect agreement therewith. It may be thought by some that this is a state which cannot be obtained but by a long experimental process in the Christian life, and therefore is not to be expected in those who have been but a few years in the profession of the truth and doctrine of the New dispensation. This I conceive to be an error. Such a conclusion only serves to foster our spiritual indolence, perpetuate our imperfections, and cause us to urge excuses for them, on the ground of our being no farther advanced in the heavenly life. Every spiritual state, and every degree in the regeneration, are of and from the LORD. He is ever ready to communicate his divine Spirit at all times, agreeably to his own saying, “Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”* Not any thing therefore is wanting, except the opening of our minds to the reception of the LORD’s divine light and love. If as truly penitent, reformed, and humble minds, we hunger and thirst for the bread and water of life,

* Rev. iii. 20.

ardently desiring to be the LORD's in body, soul, and spirit, that so, the love of self, of the world, and of evil may no longer bear rule over us, he will give unto us all needful grace; and if "as new-born babes, we desire the pure milk of the Word that we may grow thereby;" in spirit enter into the kingdom of heaven; adore the LORD Jesus Christ and live only to Him; then shall we find full power from Him for entering into the required state of entire resignation of our will to his will. The great mistake of too many is, that they think it enough to acquire a knowledge of divine truth, enter into the Church and advocate its cause, without taking care to enter in by the door of true penitence, reformation, and humility. Hence it is that their religion is only external, and destitute of life; because they have not prepared themselves to be baptized with the holy spirit and with fire; they have not been born again by the renewing and re-creating operation of the spirit of the LORD. Such persons are content to know that the LORD is always accessible to them, without ever approaching near to Him as their Father, with childlike confidence and affection. They are like a man who should seek how to obtain introduction to a king, and then obstinately refuse, without any reason whatever, to be introduced into his presence, and partake of his royal favour and bounty. They have not that religion which is of Jesus Christ. Their knowledge, worship, and advocating the cause, and indeed their whole external conduct, is a husk without a kernel,—form without life,—appearance without reality,—and a deception of the most awful kind. And herein they resemble, I fear, the greater part of the Christian world. They are pleased, and rest satisfied with mere outward things. A name, peculiar doctrines, a particular kind of worship, and, in some cases, splendid ceremonies, and vain observances, entertain the natural man. Many such worshipers are deemed very religious, and conceive themselves to be so; whereas the mere outward incidentals of worship which so engage their reverential regard, when viewed in themselves are but mere shadows, pretty toys to amuse, and splendid nothings, which vanish away and are gone for ever. And thus the enemy of souls has caught the superficial in his gilded snare. Happily, however, through the superintending Divine Mercy of the LORD, there is always protection afforded to the simple in heart and conscientiously obedient, under every form of religion. Still it is the fact that almost all the world is deluded by empty outside appearances,

deeming themselves free as the inhabitants of heaven, while they are captives to infernals, and the subjects of death! How few, alas! consider religion as somewhat internal,—its essence a divine and holy principle from Jesus Christ, restoring and bringing back all the powers and faculties of the human mind from an infernal love, life, and conduct, and introducing them to a spiritual state of purity, righteousness, innocence, and divine order, to the end that man may no longer be like a mere animal or a morally insane being, a captive to infernals, and a subject of misery from hell; but that he may have conjunction of life with his Heavenly Father, and be a purified happy subject of his kingdom for ever! Did we seriously consider these things, how earnest should we be to seek and to obtain that internal and holy state of resignation to the LORD, by which we might ever be receptive of the Divine power and influence of his blessed Word and Spirit, for our purification and exaltation into such a holy, happy, and peaceful state of life!

And shall the members of our most glorious intellectual and practical Church content themselves with a name,—with science,—with external professions and outward appearances? How contrary this to that eternal truth and spiritual knowledge with which we are so clearly acquainted! We may, in some degree, apologize for the professors of other systems of faith, inasmuch as their erroneous sentiments, long established and warmly maintained, lead them to depend upon externals, and trust in shadows. But we have no such excuse. Internal things are opened to us. The principles, the life, the nature of heaven, and of true order and felicity, are set before our intellectual eyes in the clear light of the eternal Sun. We know, from the unerring testimony of Divine revelation, what man must be, in order to be truly happy. Consequently we must perceive that we never can be the happy subjects of the LORD's new heavens until we are wholly and altogether the LORD's, insomuch that there be nothing in us, belonging to us, or done by us, that is not of Him: but that He be our life, love, use, righteousness, happiness, and our ALL. And how is it possible for all this to be effected, unless we resign our souls and bodies,—our affections and thoughts,—our will and understanding, to Him, to be made spiritual and heavenly by his Divine operation and government? Let me, then, intreat you my friends to enter deeply yet humbly into Divine things and subjects. Stand not at the threshold of the Church, or the borders of heaven;

but enter into the sanctuary, the holy of holies, and there learn by actual experience in communion with the LORD, what a true Christian is. "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." The outside of the interior Christian corresponds with what is within; and within, in his internal, is the LORD in his Divine love and good, as the life and essence of his soul, as the source from whence his external clothing proceeds. Hence the true Christian sees the importance of the petition in the LORD's Prayer, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so upon the earth."—Can this be done, or can it not? If not, it would not be required. What less can be implied in this petition, than an earnest desire that the Divine will may be our will; for when this is our state, the LORD's will is done in the natural and external man, as it is done in the heavens, or the internal man; and the internal man being the recipient of the LORD's Divine love, which has its residence in the new will, or new heart, the affections and thoughts flow from thence into the external, to govern, regulate, and order not only his words and conduct, but all his natural appetites and passions, agreeably to the will of Jesus Christ. In this case the understanding is clearly and constantly enlightened to distinguish between good and evil, truth and error. Evil and error are continually rejected, and the whole man is given up to the will and good pleasure of his God, with satisfaction, delight, and blessedness. Nothing less than this can be implied in doing the LORD's will on earth as it is done in heaven. It may be asked here, "Must then the true Christian be totally free from all evil and error, and thus pure as an angel?" I would answer, "He cannot be expected to be wholly so, because the continual putting away and dying to evil and error is one part of doing the LORD's will."—And here is the difference between the man of full resignation to the divine will, and the man who is not so resigned; the former immediately ceases from and rejects every evil and error as they appear; he does not parley with them, but gives them no quarter; whereas the latter is less attentive to discover, and more reluctant to relinquish the disorders and impurities of the natural man; and at the same time more disposed to selfish indulgences, because he is only in part, but not wholly the LORD's. Hence the improprieties, and which may truly be called evils, so customary in trade, business, merchandize, and the like, are indulged without considering that they are evils, and injurious to the spiritual

state: and for the same reason, idle pleasures, and contaminating gratifications of the age, are given into as innocent and harmless. Whereas the true Christian, who has resigned his whole will to the will of the LORD, not only sees the above things improper and defiling as evils; but he has no relish for them. He is superior to all such fascinating vanities. His mind,—his life's-love is so much in heaven and heavenly things, that he cannot stoop to the customary follies of life. He has neither time nor inclination to indulge in the empty toys of perverted nature. His entertainments, pursuits, and gratifications, are elevated far above the earth. Even his ordinary activities in the world are of a heavenly quality, for they are filled with heavenly life by being ruled and animated by the heavenly motive of duty to God and the neighbour. Hence his delights are found only in that world where the bright beams, the pure light and heat of heaven's Eternal Sun, shine with celestial splendour, and purify every pleasure and every delight. He considers that he is NOT OF THIS WORLD. He remembers that his own regeneration corresponds with the glorification of the LORD; and he reflects upon the holy yet imitable example of his Divine Master. He knows that Jesus Christ, as a man, avoided every thing that was not in agreement with strict righteousness. "Thy will be done, and not my will," was his language in all things, and his every moment's practice. And although we cannot be as perfect as our divine pattern, nevertheless the true Christian will labour more and more to imitate Him, remembering his words, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." While desiring above all things, to abide in the LORD's love, how little, how disagreeable must every thing appear which has not upon it the stamp of Divine approbation. He stands, as it were, upon an elevated spot, taking a view of his mental garden stored with wholesome and beautiful plants, trees, and fruit; he beholds them with extacy of spirit, and acknowledges them all as the gift of his adorable LORD, designed to support, nourish, entertain, and delight his soul, and render him blessed and happy. But if in this prosperous and fruitful garden he discovers an offensive weed or deleterious plant, he immediately roots it up and casts it away; he suffers no noxious vegetable to cumber the ground, or injure the fruitfulness, use, and beauty of this garden of his God. But the man who is not altogether given up to the Divine will, and whose natural affec-

tions have yet too much power, although he feels a satisfaction and pleasure in the useful productions of his garden, too often overlooks the weeds interspersed here and there, and suffers them to remain too long growing stronger and stronger, and perhaps shedding their baneful seed around them, so that if they do not destroy the useful productions, they injure their growth, and prevent much of the good, delight, and happiness he would otherwise receive. And hence it is that some professors make so slow a progress in the spiritual life; enjoy so little peace and happiness; and will have so much to go through when they enter the world of spirits, if then and there they can at all be prepared for the heavens. How plain then it is to see the importance of being wholly given up in body, soul, and spirit, to the LORD JESUS CHRIST our only God and Saviour! It comprehends every thing we can wish or want to eternity. Surely, then, New Church Christians, of all men, should not only see the importance and excellence of this state, but also give themselves no rest until they obtain it. When our blessed LORD calls upon us to "deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him,"* he can mean nothing less than self-renunciation and submission to his will in all things; and an entire dependance upon Him as the only source of all our happiness. And when he further tells us that "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat,—because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it,"† he plainly sets before us the way to death, and the way to life. When it is said "wide is the gate, and broad is the way," the term "gate" refers to the will, and the term "way" to the understanding. Hence it appears that there are numberless affections, concupiscences, lusts, and propensities, which dwell in, and proceed from, the fallen will of man, all which introduce him into this wide infernal "gate," and enter along with him. "The way" is broad enough, affords latitude enough, to admit them all, for the understanding is replete with as many errors, fables, and deceptive thoughts, as the will is with affections and lusts: the will and understanding of man by birth being immersed in evil and error, so that the proprium is nothing but evil and falsehood. And most evident it is, that by these man enters into the "wide gate," and travels on the "broad way which leads to destruction;" but those who

* Matt. xvi. 24.

† Matt. vii. 13, 14.

would walk in the narrow "way that leadeth unto life," must deny themselves, and nullify every evil lust and concupiscence, and all false and perverse thoughts must die to self, and take up their cross by resisting the corrupt proprium and the influx into it from the hells. And because no impurities or errors can pass with us into the kingdom of heaven, it is said, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." By this, also, we are instructed, that we must oppose and fight against whatever is of self and the world; die to our fallen proprium and self-love; and as penitent, believing, humble Christians, give ourselves up to the LORD, to receive from Him a new will, a new love, and new life; then, strait as the gate is, it stands open and wide enough to admit the single mind with all its goods and truths born of the Word and Spirit; but too strait to admit the inflated follies and swelling vanities of the infernal kingdom. It is said that "narrow is the way," for being strictly bounded by the principles and doctrines, truths and laws, of divine revelation, there is no admission for the latitudinarian derivations of pride and covetousness,—the vain traditions and inventions of men. The understanding of the traveller in the "narrow way" being enlightened by the rays of the heavenly Sun, he can detect and reject error; he knows what is contrary to his new will and its holy laws; and what are the doctrines and truths which lead him safely along the narrow way to the eternal kingdom of his God. The way to that kingdom is a living way, for the kingdom itself is a kingdom of everlasting life and light; consequently neither the gate nor the way will admit any thing impure, any thing of self-love, the love of the world, or any thing of the opposite kingdom of death and darkness. Thus it is that the true Christian resigns his will and understanding, his affections and thoughts, his words and works, to Jesus Christ, as his God,—the life, the happiness, the all in all of his soul for ever! To this I add an extract from the heavenly-minded authoress I have before quoted;—"This word resignation to God, comprehends all things: for he who is resigned to Him, knows Him and loves Him; he knows also true virtue, that he may follow it, and the falsehood of vices, that he may avoid them; because God gives Himself to the soul that is resigned to Him, and the Holy Spirit lives in him, and abiding in him replenishes him with his Divine gifts, to give him to know all things necessary, and with his blessed and divine fruits

to entertain and delight him, so that all our happiness depends upon our resigning our wills to the will of God."

Thus it appears that the true and genuine religion of the New Church Christian, is no less than our dwelling in the LORD and the LORD in us; a total, unreserved, and free surrender of our whole souls to Him in all things and states, that He may be our life, our love, our faith, and our righteousness, and that his will may be done in and by us as it is done in heaven. And is not this the state of angels and good spirits in heaven? is not this the state we are hoping for and expecting? and therefore ought to be preparing for it, by devoutly cherishing it on earth? For is it not that state only in which it is possible for us to live happy and blessed to all eternity? And if so, is it not for our unspeakable advantage that we enter into this state now? What can hinder us? The world cannot, for the LORD has overcome the world! All the powers of hell cannot, for the LORD, by his Spirit, has given us full power "over all the power of the enemy!" Not any thing can possibly hinder or prevent us, except it be our own selves. And shall that invaluable gift, our free-will, which was given us on purpose to ensure our everlasting felicity in the LORD's kingdom, be the cause, through the abuse of it, of preventing us from entering into that kingdom? Assuredly the God of heaven is infinitely more kind to men, than men are to themselves! otherwise they would never abuse this divine gift, but use and improve it, so as to ensure their true felicity. Knowing that it is this by which we are distinguished from, and are superior to, all other created existences, we should maintain our pre-eminence. We have an understanding given us to know what is evil and what is good; we have a will given us and providentially preserved unto us in a state of liberty, to enable us freely to choose the one or the other, and upon the choice we make, our eternal destination, to misery or happiness, depends. We are well assured there are but two things, two ways, and two states for us to make choice of, namely, evil or good,—the broad or narrow way,—hell or heaven; and happy are they that can say with the Psalmist, "I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me."* In choosing the narrow way, we resign up ourselves and all our affections and thoughts, powers and principles, words and works to the Divine will, government, and disposal; and we accept instead of ourselves and our own will, the LORD, as our supreme good,—our

* Psa'm cxix. 30.

ALL IN ALL. And here permit me to declare that, through Divine mercy, I have long been enabled to see the infinite importance of a total resignation to the will and good pleasure of Jesus Christ my Redeemer and Regenerator, and I feel and experience that the more I am enabled so to do; the greater delight and happiness I enjoy. I plainly perceive that heaven itself flows down into this state of mind, with all manner of happy feelings and perceptions. Moreover, when this surrender of our will to the LORD takes place, it is attended with a full confidence and certainty, that we are every moment under the direction of our Divine Parent, and therefore that every event and circumstance, whether apparently adverse or prosperous, pleasant or unpleasant to the natural man, is seen to be of the LORD's direction or permission, and assuredly intended for our fuller preparation to receive his favour and love, and to rise higher in the use, delight, and blessedness of his eternal kingdom. Hence every state through which we pass is seen to be both important and necessary; appointed or permitted by Infinite wisdom and goodness; and the only best way to the heavens designed for our eternal residence. Whether we experience prosperity or adversity; riches or poverty; persecution or esteem; sickness or health; tranquillity of mind or temptation of spirit; depression or elevation; all things are perceived as most suitable to work for present good and eternal peace, under the permission, direction, or appointment of our Heavenly Father. The very consideration that Infinite love, wisdom, and power are all engaged to bless the resigned soul, and order every particular of his state so as best to promote his salvation and eternal felicity in heaven, should be sufficient to reconcile him to whatever shall take place in his journey through the wilderness to Canaan.

Behold, then, my Christian Brethren, not only the duty, the importance, but the unspeakable blessedness of a total resignation of our will, heart, and life to the Divine will of Jesus Christ our Heavenly Parent! It is what we are called upon to do; it is all we have to do; and the doing it is the full, perfect, and never-ending felicity of man! It cannot be otherwise than that every sincere and spiritual subject of the New Jerusalem will labour to attain this blessed state; for so far as it is attained, so far will he find all his happiness and delight in the LORD Jesus Christ and the things of his kingdom; so that every moment he will be ready to exclaim from the over-

flowing fulness of his heart, "Happy is that man whose God is the LORD!"

SECTION XXXV.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

I SHALL NOW offer a few thoughts upon death, and our resurrection into the world of spirits. As to death itself, we are all well assured that although the event is certain, the time when it shall happen, to us, is uncertain. And no doubt it is of Divine Providence that it should be so. For did mankind know the day, or even the year of their departure out of this world, the most serious consequences would follow, for such knowledge would destroy all freedom of will and action; men would do what is right from the compulsion of fear, to the destruction of the noblest attributes of human nature, while the uncontrollable fears of some would probably drive them to insanity.

Following the usual course of writers on this subject, I naturally refer, in the first place, to the great numbers of our fellow-creatures who are called away suddenly, and sometimes without one minute's warning; affording them no time to settle their concerns; take their leave of their friends, or offer up a single ejaculation to the Most High. This, my brethren, as well as a thousand other circumstances, calls upon us in the most awakening and impressive manner to be in a state of preparation for the solemn event. But when I say a state of preparation for the solemn event, I do not mean that we should look upon death in the manner that Christians usually do; for their views of it are such as to prevent their turning the mind to it, instead of having it frequently, and I may say, pleasantly present in their thoughts. How many have I heard, even of serious and religious minds, say,—“O! I cannot bear to think of death—don't mention it: it terrifies my mind—I dread the idea of it—there is something so awful in it, that, were I to dwell upon it, I should be melancholy.” And need we wonder at this aversion to think of dying, when we consider what the ideas commonly entertained of death are? Death, in the view of some is very near to annihilation, for they conceive that

when the gross body of matter dies, they are no more rational human beings until the end of the world and the supposed resurrection of the dissipated dead body; and since the end of the world, as they expect, may not take place for thousands of years to come, they may well dread dying! 'Tis true, they suppose there is some vital spark belonging to them which returns to God, or is reserved some where or other, but that as to happiness or misery, or being complete human beings again, they have no notion of it until the dissipated body of matter is raised again, by some means or other changed into a glorious body and united to its vital spark, and then made happy or miserable, according as the last judgment shall determine! Now, these views of death are sufficient to deter the mind from thinking about it; yea, quite enough to cast a melancholy gloom over the countenance, and depress the inmost soul! But the better instructed Christian of the LORD's true and spiritual Church, entertains no such groundless and melancholy ideas. He beholds not death as a terrific monster, coming towards him with awful strides, a threatening countenance, and pointed lance, ready to terminate his existence and usher him into a state of unconsciousness, next to annihilation, for thousands of years to come! He will not look nor long for his gross body of earth to be re-assumed; nor dream of worlds destroyed by fire; nature breathing out her last deep sigh; millions upon millions of material carcases rising up to appear in a world of spirits and recognize their vital spark there, and when re-animated by it, to stand in judgment; and either mount to heaven or sink to hell for ever! None of these wild, extravagant, and unscriptural notions depress his mind, prevent his contemplation of the dying hour, or fill his soul with horror! We look upon death as a friend, a welcome messenger, for to us death means resurrection! To the good man his imagined countenance wears smiles, his symbolical lance makes but a momentary slight incision to set the soul at liberty from earth and clay, and rise a man complete for ever! But what I would first call your attention to, is the importance of being in a state of preparation for bodily death; for with all our exhilarating views of dissolution, and the many animating circumstances connected with it, we nevertheless may be so inattentive to the important work we have to do, as to severely regret that inattention when the hour of dissolution draws near, and when our minds should be in a state of calmness and peace. You will not suppose that by a preparation

for death, I mean the constantly employing our minds upon that event, daily thinking of it, and about the circumstances connected with it; for so far from this, the truly spiritual Christian will think very little about it, hardly any more than about other necessary or unavoidable events. He will not trouble his mind about the time when, whether the next day, next week, or next year, nor about the manner how, the place where, or the circumstances attending it! These things he has no business with. They are under the Divine Providence and direction of his Heavenly Father, and for him to concern himself about them would be neither useful, wise, nor prudent. In fact, through Divine mercy, he will look upon bodily death in such a light that it will give him much pleasure, but no pain. The contemplation of it is, for many important reasons, most animating and joyful to the prepared Christian! And when I speak of our being in a state of preparation, I mean to say, that we are not in a state of preparation for bodily death until the soul, although still in the body, has already found its home in heaven, or, to use the apostle's language, has its conversation, or rather citizenship in heaven. I mean by this, that our life's love must be elevated out of self, this world, and the hells, into the kingdom of the LORD. I am now speaking to Christians of the New Jerusalem, who know, that when the life's-love of man is of a spiritual and celestial nature, his spirit is already invisibly associated with angels, in conjunction with Jesus Christ, and consequently in heaven, heaven itself being in him. How then is it possible for us to be prepared for the actual enjoyment of the New heavens, when we leave this world, if our ruling love, our essential life be not of a heavenly nature and quality? The first and grand object, then, for our consideration is this, whether we are so changed in disposition and renewed in heart, as to be receptive of those Divine principles from Jesus Christ which establish the kingdom of heaven in the soul. If this be our state, a solid foundation is laid for a glorious immortality. But if we depend upon our knowledge of Divine truth, however extensive that knowledge may be; or upon faith in Divine truth; or upon our external profession of it, while at the same time no predominant spiritual affection is opened within us, and our life's-love remains unchanged, we may assure ourselves that we are altogether in a state of self-deception and dangerous delusion. We know that in states of fear, affliction, or when under the apprehension that death is near, all supplications for

mercy and pardon, resolutions of amendment, and ardent promises of living better, avail nothing; because they are not made in a state of freedom, but of compulsion through dread of misery in the life to come; thus they do not spring from ourselves, and therefore do not belong to us. They belong to the exciting cause, and cease to operate when it ceases. Hence all such resolutions and promises are generally forgotten when the fear or the affliction is over. The intelligent member of the New Church never forgets, that the life's-love must be changed, the heart renewed, and spiritual principles of pure faith and charity be implanted in the internal man, as the only rational and scriptural ground of preparation for the kingdom of God; for these principles constitute that very kingdom in the soul agreeably to our LORD's words, "The kingdom of God is within you;" and there it must be formed before we can gain admission into it outwardly hereafter. "The kingdom of God," says the apostle, "is righteousness, [brotherly] peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."* And when the LORD's kingdom is thus firmly established, the natural man and external life are sure to be governed by these heavenly principles. It is then that we shun all evils as sins against God and obey his holy laws; or do good because we hate the evil and love the good; thus is the natural and external man brought into the order of the heavenly life. Being brought into this state, and remaining faithful in it, we are every day preparing more fully for bodily dissolution, and the entrance of the purified spirit into a better and eternal world. And if we continually live this life from holy principles of faith and love, loving Divine truth, Divine good, our neighbour, and our LORD, then are we not only in a state of preparation for death, but we are daily approaching nearer to the angels who minister unto us, and entering into closer conjunction with the LORD's Divine Humanity, and advancing in those blessed qualities and graces which form heaven within us, and fit us for the enjoyment of all the felicities of the New heavens above. This is the preparation of a spiritual New Church Christian. While improving every day he lives, he does not trouble his mind about the time when he shall die; nor has he his work to do in states of sickness and affliction, for this he has done already, when vigorous both in body and mind. He is then calm and composed; his spirit is at peace; and his confidence well placed in the God of his salvation. Happy is the

* See Rom. xiv. 17, with the context.

man who is thus prepared for that serious moment which shall close the scene of life below and usher his soul into eternity! And unhappy, indeed, are they who have the most important moral and intellectual work of their lives yet to do, and in states of mind and body altogether unfitted for it! Living in an habitual state of preparation for death and judgment, agrees with the advice and command of our holy LORD, when he tells us "to watch, and pray," and "be ready;" for the spiritual Christian is ever upon the watch; he is essentially in perpetual prayer, because his heart's desire, his life's-love is towards the LORD and his kingdom; hence he is ready, and whenever death approaches, instead of crying aloud for mercy and pardon, like a man sinking into the infernal regions, he can say with calmness and exultation, "Come, LORD Jesus."

Seeing, then, who is the truly prepared Christian, let us inquire what this final event is which is so welcome to him, and which men in general so much dread. It is called death; and it may be said in the words of the poet, "We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one." For as to the death of the body, there can be no doubt that most people form ideas of it much more gloomy and distressing than is justified by experience, for their ideas are not founded in reason and fact, but only in vague apprehensions. There are very few persons who have lived to a full age in the world who have not suffered much more in some affliction, than what is generally felt in the act of dying. As to the evil and unprepared mind, I say nothing upon that subject at present. I am now speaking only of the prepared and spiritual Christian, and in reference to his dying feelings, there are several circumstances which lead me to judge that he suffers less than is commonly supposed. To mention all of them may not be necessary, but I will notice two or three. In the first place, it frequently happens that by the previous affliction, the bodily powers and sensations are so weakened and exhausted, and nature so spent, that the body is able to feel but little in the last moments. And secondly, I conceive the mind and thought of the expiring Christian is very much abstracted from, and lifted above the body, and all natural and worldly things; and under the influence of angelic attendants, is drawn towards, and employed upon, more important and heavenly things. I have witnessed many proofs of this in my conversations with dying Christians, with some a few hours before death, and with others, within a few minutes. And thirdly, I conceive that

good angels, or angelic spirits, are more peculiarly attendant on the sincere Christian in the dying hour, are busy in communicating to his mind, and directing it to, celestial and heavenly subjects, in order to smooth the passage from death to life, and prepare him for a new state, a new world, and new associations. Hence I conclude that the death of the good man is by far more easy and tranquil than what is commonly imagined, and that we have little to fear or dread as to the event itself. Howbeit it is soon over,—a few hours or a few minutes close the scene, and put an end to all mere bodily feelings for ever.

We now come to the weighty subject of our resurrection, or rising out of a natural body and transient world, into a spiritual body and an eternal world. And I trust we all feel it a mercy for which we can never be sufficiently thankful, that the true resurrection of man is now fully brought to light and clearly unfolded. The ideas of Christians in general upon this subject are such as to affect the mind with the deepest melancholy, and cause it to dread the thought of dissolution. We are now made acquainted through the writings of our author, that man rises out of the body when all warmth from the heart ceases; and that then by the divine power of the LORD, the spirit rises from the material world in which it was conscious, and appears in the world of spirits, a living man, in spiritual substance and form, with every power and principle, faculty, and sense, constituent of a man. He loses nothing by death but the gross material body which he had in the world; and which he wants no longer, and never will have occasion for again, and consequently it will never be re-assumed. To this earthly world it belongs; to earth it is consigned; and there it must remain. This just view of the resurrection of man is taught in the oracles of eternal truth, and it is wonderful that it is neither believed, nor known, nor seen by the Christian world. Jesus Christ Himself tells us concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that they are living men, that God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto him;* the evangelist tells us that Moses and Elias were seen as living men talking with the LORD on the mount;†—that the “thief” on the cross was to be with the LORD that day in paradise;‡—and that the angels which appeared at the sepulchre were men in a human form;§—again; the angels that John saw were men, and told him that

* Matt. xxii. 31, 32.

† Luke xxiii. 43.

† Matt. xvii. 3.

§ Matt. ii. 2. Luke xxiv. 4.

they had been of his brethren the prophets in the world, though now angels in heaven.* When all this clear and divine evidence meets our eyes, with more still contained in the Word of the LORD, how strange it is that men should remain so blind to this most animating view of the subject, and dream that after death we are sparks or vapours—mere nothings, for thousands of years to come,—mere nothings, until a gross material body of earth shall rise and furnish a mould to make us into men again, and fit us—not for a material world suited to a risen material body but a pure spiritual world, into which as the apostle tells us,† nor flesh, nor blood, nor earth, nor clay, can ever enter! From these gloomy ideas, these strange and unscriptural sentiments we are happily freed. With us, in very deed and in truth, “to be absent from the body is to be present with the LORD,”‡ not as unconscious “vital sparks,” but substantial men and women, consciously living in imperishable “spiritual bodies.” What then is bodily dissolution to a truly Christian and prepared man! Call it death no longer. Death is resurrection misnamed. Man never dies. Death has an appearance, however, of reality to the survivors, according to which they must express themselves. Let us, therefore, contemplate our last moments here with tranquillity and joy. This is the blessed period when we are to be set at liberty from the prison of a corruptible body, freed from the pains and afflictions, cares and troubles, evils and sins of a depraved world! This is the moment in which we change mortality for immortality, and time for eternity!—Yea, this is the happy hour when we shall appear substantial, spiritual, living men, to die no more for ever. And to crown the whole, this is the day when we shall associate openly with angels; be conducted by them in the delightful path that leads to the New heaven, dwell in one of their societies, and be happy angels with them to all eternity!

Let these considerations, these most glorious prospects, not only excite our gratitude, our thanksgiving, and our joy, but may they also stimulate us to prepare and stand ready for bodily dissolution, and a happy resurrection into the world of spirits, the company of angels, and the glories of immortality!

* Rev. xxii. 8, 9.

† 1 Cor. xv. 50.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 8.

SECTION XXXVI.

THE STATE OF THE NEW CHURCH CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD
OF SPIRITS, AND HIS ENTRANCE INTO THE NEW HEAVENS.

EVERY preceding section is in some degree connected with, and leads to, these two great subjects. For all the parts of our regeneration, every step in our religious progress, are so many means calculated to prepare us for a happy entrance into the world of spirits, and an eternal state of felicity in heaven. Indeed the particular providence of the LORD is operative in every minute circumstance of our lives, and his great end therein is our regeneration, in order to make us happy in his kingdom. This being the case, it should be our constant care so to co-operate with the LORD, that his most merciful purpose may be accomplished. For so far as we do not co-operate, that end is retarded; but so far as we do co-operate, that end is promoted. Hence we may see how much depends upon the right use of that liberty, or free will and rationality, with which we are endowed. We may employ them to our own destruction, or through divine assistance we may employ and improve them to our highest happiness! How important then it is, that we co-operate with the LORD, and so use our freedom and rationality as to obtain this infinitely important object,—the complete salvation, and everlasting felicity of our souls! We are here but a little while at the longest, and then we are called away into the world of spirits, a middle place or state between heaven and hell. It is in this region that the wicked on their entrance there, by a certain process are divested of every thing extrinsically good or true, which in the world had become attached to them by external habit. By this process they become altogether, or both internally and externally, forms of the evil and the false, and then they are cast, or rather they themselves descend, into the infernal regions, to dwell with like impure and polluted characters for ever. And as to the good, or those who are in states of regeneration, they also in the world of spirits are divested of all that is uncongenial to their ruling love of good, every thing in the nature of moral infirmity or error, every stain upon their wedding garment. Thus do they become internally and externally pure forms of goodness

and truth; and then they ascend into heaven, to dwell with the like blessed and happy spirits to all eternity.

My friends, I write to this end,—that truths revealed, believed in, and professed, may have their proper and timely effect upon our hearts and lives. We believe that on our bodily dissolution, we shall enter into the world of spirits, and that our condition there, and the circumstances attending our stay there, will be more or less joyous or otherwise, according to our state of life when we enter that world. I do not intend minutely to describe what our condition will then be, or what will take place in respect to us when there. On these points I refer you to the writings of our Author. But, my brethren, we shall do well to bear in mind, that in that state and world, a process of purification will take place with all spiritual minds, or with all who have here entered into the regenerate life, for few indeed leave this world perfectly pure. In order that this work may be effected, we shall there have to sustain infestations, temptations, and conflicts from the infernal powers, more or less, in order to our complete vastation of every thing that has any relationship to the powers of darkness, because, so far as any evil, impurity, or error may then be attached to us, so far we are connected with infernal spirits. And as their hatred and rage are ever against goodness, truth, and the LORD himself, we may be assured they will employ all their power, artifice, and subtlety against us, with a determination, if possible, to draw us down into their own state, and their own hell. And we are informed, that all infestations, temptations, and conflicts, suffered by the imperfectly good there, are more painful and severe than they are in the present world and life; because, being then in a spiritual world, and in a spiritual and internal state, not only our own impurities will be seen in a more deformed and horrid appearance (by reason of the clearness of vision consequent on the removal of the obtuse body,) but also the very hells, and the infernals themselves, will be seen and known in all their horrors. In consequence of our connection with them through remaining evil and infirmity, the process of our total separation and deliverance from them by its removal, will be extremely painful and trying, much more so than the like process while here, because, being here in a natural state and in the body, the things just mentioned are more out of sight, and less known, and therefore less trying; added to which the body serves to deaden the acuteness of mental sen-

sations, which become inexpressibly keener by its removal. Moreover, as it is painful to a serious mind, while in this world, to be connected with evil men; to see so much evil and pollution around him; to feel so much impurity and disorder in himself; and to have to combat against it; how much more trying and painful will these things be, when evil itself, and the infernal subjects of it, are not only presented to him in their own odious and most disgusting forms, but he is also sensibly and openly infested by them, harassed by their malignity, and has to work and force his way through them, as it were, to his home in the heavens!

I fear these subjects are not so much thought of and attended to as their importance demands. We are too prone to act like those persons who think little or nothing about what shall take place in the next world, and who say, "if we can but get into heaven we shall be happy, and it is time enough to know what that world is when we get there;"—not seeing, as they might see, that the knowledge thus obtained, comes too late; and that its sole value can only be realized here, by such knowledge being brought to bear upon our spiritual improvement. But we who enjoy a superior dispensation, should be Christians of superior intelligence, as well as be superior in the wisdom of our conduct. We should seriously endeavour to acquaint ourselves with all these deeply interesting subjects relating to the future life, which are now opened to our intellectual view; and then we shall be able to improve them, make a right application of them, and so become wise for eternity, even while bounded by time, and imprisoned in clay. And since we know that immediately after death we shall enter into the world of spirits, and there undergo a process of purification and full and final preparation for the New heavens, this knowledge should produce upon us the following blessed and happy effects. —The little and uncertain time we have to stay here, together with the talents, means, and mercies we enjoy, should all be improved and employed so as to accomplish, as far as possible, our separation from all evil and error, the purification of our mind and life, and the reception of that divine good and truth from Jesus Christ, which will bring us more fully and directly into the order and form of heaven! I am aware that some serious minds may reply to this, and say, "We have so many concerns, and cares and circumstances of a worldly and temporal nature to attend to, that we cannot do this work so

fully as we wish to do." But this is not a right method of reasoning upon the subject. These are not the things which, abstractedly considered, prevent the work; for these circumstances rightly considered, are the very means and occasions, under a gracious Providence, most suitable to effect our full and complete emancipation from the world and the senses; and would we faithfully make use of them, we should certainly find it to be so from actual experience. It is something more interior that prevents our greater spiritual success, and that is, our natural affections are too much fixed upon, and too fervidly engaged and exercised in these temporal concerns; and the consequence is, that the ardour of our spiritual love is weakened and becomes less effective. We do not consider as we should, that the degree of our improvement in goodness must ever be exactly in proportion to the vigour and constancy of our endeavours, and especially our endeavours to detect our besetting sins, that we may shun them, and put them entirely away, "for the sake of our LORD, and his gospel." Only let pure love to truth and good,—to heavenly things and states,—to the LORD and His kingdom, have the dominion and rule the natural man, and sanctify its affections, and then all temporal and worldly concerns will stand in their right place; and in this case they will promote rather than hinder our purification, for when acting under the influence of superior principles of action, we shall engage in the affairs of life from the love of use, and not from self-love; and consequently these affairs, and the opportunities they afford of acting rightly, will contribute, not only to our purification, but also to our exaltation in the future world and life. We must not forget, that a man's BEST opportunity of rising, is when he is MOST tempted to fall, and therefore in most danger of falling. Hence I draw the following conclusions, that in proportion as our spiritual life's love is preserved in its vigour and activity, it will be continually purifying the natural man from its evils and errors; bringing every affection and thought into order, preserving every principle, faculty, and the recipient vessels thereof in a state to receive the divine influx of truth and good from the LORD through the internal, until the whole man, down to the most ultimate thought, word, and work, becomes a pure and sanctified form, the tabernacle of the Most High! Hence, my brethren, you perceive what work may be done while here; and how that work may be accomplished. Upon this part of my

subject I will only add the inquiry, whether it be possible for us so to advance in the regenerate life while here to such an extent, that evil and error shall be so far cast out, and Divine truth and good so far received and improved, that we may have but little of that unpleasant process to pass through in the world of spirits which has been described; but a little time to stay there; and the more speedily be elevated to our eternal home and final destination. To this inquiry I reply, that I have no doubt whatever of its possibility, and I ask you in return, Is it not most desirable that we should enter into the world of spirits in such a blessed state of preparation? I cannot doubt your answer. And the object of what I have already said, is no less than this, that with holy zeal, and ardent love, we may all pursue the purities and beatitudes of our Heavenly Father's kingdom, with faithfulness, circumspection, and delight; and as truly heaven-born Christians, so give up our hearts and lives to the Divine will, and so co-operate with our blessed LORD in all things and states, that the great and important work we have to do may be so far accomplished here, that we may enter into our eternal sabbath of rest almost as soon as we enter into the world of spirits! This, indeed, is well worth labouring for, praying for, and working for, every day we live below; and nothing will more secure our entire faithfulness than the continual effort to accomplish it. I am therefore very anxious that all my beloved brethren in the LORD may endeavour to attain it. I had almost said, "I know it is to be attained." And blessed is that Christian, yea doubly blessed in this life, and unspeakably more so in the next, who, to the utmost, endeavours to attain it, for the endeavour, in this case, is even of greater value than success. We have the means, the mercies, the prospects, all presenting adequate incitements and powers; we have everything to stimulate and encourage our souls in this all-important work of full regeneration, so that we may enter fully prepared into the world of spirits, and find a speedy passage thence to heaven!

But how can I attempt to write anything at all worthy of that most blessed and happy state! All that I could say upon this high subject, when compared with the enlightened views, the animating account which our divinely instructed author has given, would be as a drop of water to the ocean.* All, there-

* See SWEDENBORG's work *On Heaven and Hell*, which may be had through any bookseller, price 5s., from the publisher of this volume.

fore, that I can say, is but a feeble attempt to elevate my own mind, and to remind yours, concerning that eternal state of felicity and glory, to which we all, I trust, are approaching.

We are informed by our author, that so soon as the mind of a regenerate spirit in the world of spirits is fully prepared for his final state, he perceives a road which leads to the heavens, which road he takes, (probably accompanied by angels,) at the end of which road there is a gate; this gate opens and lets him into heaven. He then pursues his way from one society to another, until he comes to one altogether congenial to his own peculiar state, and, indeed, to which he belongs, and of which he is interiorly, but hitherto unconsciously, a member. With this society he remains, and is perfectly at home and happy with them, as if he had always known them as his own nearest and dearest kindred. Now, if I were to ask one of my regenerate brethren what society he would desire to dwell with in the eternal world, which he supposes would contribute most essentially to his happiness, I conceive he would reply, "I desire to dwell with a society of angelic beings, all of whom love the LORD with all the heart, who love, that is to say, his Divine character, attributes, and qualities; who love their brethren better than themselves, and who invariably and without possibility of change, live in conformity to the Divine laws, will, and order of Jesus Christ their God." And why would my friend return this answer? Because his own essential and ruling love is of the same nature. Suppose, then, we were to live with such a society as this in heaven, totally unmolested, never disturbed or interrupted by any beings, or things of an uncongenial kind, while all there were governed by this love, and invariably led this life of celestial uses, being blessed with all that they required for support, comfort, and accommodation; would not this be a real heaven?—a satisfactory happiness? To love the LORD with all our heart; to love each other better than ourselves; and to live in conformity to the pure, the blessed laws of Divine order; surely this must be the very essence of heaven! Let me live in such a society as this and be one with them, for then I live from Jesus Christ Himself, within the Divine sphere of his love and light; I must be happy there! Give me such a society, such a state, and such a heaven as this, and what can I ask for more? But I have another reason for mentioning this subject; namely, I wish all my brethren not only to understand but constantly bear in mind, that heavenly

love as I have described it, is the very essence of heaven and of all possible happiness. Heaven is what it is from the LORD Jehovah Jesus only. His Divine love and good, wisdom and truth, constitute heaven, with all its felicity, blessedness, and delight, from the very inmost to the most ultimate of all things there. Hence it is that his Divine love and good, wisdom and truth, must be received by us, dwell in us, and be the essential life of our will and understanding while here, that so the LORD may dwell in us, as in his own, form heaven within us, and so render us capable of living in the heat, and light, and glory of his own kingdom, to enjoy its nameless beatitudes for ever! Thus it will evidently appear, that we cannot even enter into heaven unless our very life's love be of a heavenly nature. We must love what constitutes it before we can enjoy its happiness, or dwell with its inhabitants, and partake of their uses, engagements, and delights. We must supremely and wholly love Divine truth, goodness, purity, innocence, righteousness, and all those blessed qualities which constitute heaven in the soul of man, and so become pure forms, images, and likenesses of Jesus Christ our life, our happiness, our all in all. So far as this state is not completed here, it must be accomplished in the world of spirits before we can enter within the gates of the New heavens.

When we seriously meditate upon the company, the peace, the internal blessedness of heaven; our everlasting exemption there from all evil, impurity, error, pain, and disorder; with an eternal enjoyment of whatever can delight the will, gratify the understanding, and communicate exquisite pleasure and happiness, internally and externally, to all the principles, faculties, and senses, both of mind and body, these continuing and increasing without end, and without the least danger or apprehension of decrease or loss; we cannot then but conclude, and may reasonably and confidently conclude, that heaven is a state and a place of the most perfect beatitude, delight, and joy! And as to the uses, offices, and employments in which we shall be there engaged, we may assure ourselves that they will all be perfectly consistent with our state, and enhance our bliss for ever! But we may say of this blessed state as the Queen of Sheba said concerning Solomon and his dignity, that the half has not been told us, nor can be, while we are on this side the possession of it. When we reflect that we shall be men and women, human beings in spiritual undecaying substance and form, with every

faculty, power, and sense constituent of humanity, in the full vigour of health and youth, clothed with unfading beauty, the meet expression of undying love, and that the more thousands of years we there live, and the more myriads are added to the angelic company, the more excellent and beautiful will our internal and external appear; and when we consider that this delightful state will commence very soon after our departure out of this world, with what joy and hope must we contemplate our change! And how must we be stimulated to prepare and be ready for it whensoever it may take place! And when we further consider that we shall then live in the heat and light of that Divine Sun of righteousness, which is the proximate sphere of the LORD's glory, the Divine Proceeding from his glorified Humanity called the Holy Spirit, the heat of which is love, pure infinite love—the light of which is wisdom, pure infinite wisdom, that every beam and ray of this Eternal Sun is fraught with, and will communicate to, every blessed inhabitant, life, and love, and wisdom, and beatitudes without number, to animate, warm, and exhilarate every subject of those boundless heavens, and enrich them with delights and pleasures of which we can form no adequate perception, how do these things exalt our ideas of that most happy state, and inspire us with a ceaseless desire and holy ardour to enjoy them! And if the sun of this world is the mediate origin and cause of producing and perpetuating the numberless beautiful objects of nature, to regale and gratify, to cheer and please the mind, in our passage through time, what may we suppose is that Divine, ever-glowing, and Eternal Sun of the heavens, in which Jehovah Jesus is, and which proceeds from Him, and which is the origin and life of our natural sun, and thus the primary cause of all the pleasing effects produced by it! It is not possible for us to conceive what a boundless variety of pleasing and grand objects, delightful scenes, and diversified prospects, will be presented to the view of the happy inhabitants of heaven, through the creative power of that Divine and living Sun; not only will all the beauties of nature be seen, with none of its deformities, but immensely more glorious existences, such as no eye in this world has seen nor heart conceived. For every external object, scene, and enjoyment in the heavens will correspond with, and therefore be most congenial to, the pure internal states of the inhabitants, represent those states, call them forth into fulness even before the senses, and consequently be inex-

pressibly joyous to the inmost soul. But, my brethren, to all these exquisite delights and enjoyments, not one of which we can form any adequate conception of, let me add one more which not only gives the highest zest to them all, but which is the origin and source of them all, and that for ever! I allude to the Divine presence, favour, and manifested love of Jesus Christ our God,—Jehovah in his Divine humanity! “They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.”* Being thus the objects of his Divine favour and love; living in his presence; and enjoying perpetually the heat and light of the all-resplendent, infinitely glorious, and life-giving Sun of heaven, how must the blessed inhabitants increase and abound in love, wisdom, and the delights of use! And as these are the sources of all felicity, internal and external, it is impossible to form the least conception of that delight and pleasure, excellence and beauty, harmony and peace, love and joy, or, in one word, that PERFECT HAPPINESS which will be their own to all eternity! For the LORD Jehovah Jesus Himself being the very essential life of all the inhabitants, they have a Divine conjunction with Him by love, by virtue of their being the subjects of the heavenly marriage of goodness and truth, and, consequently, such a near and dear relation to a God of infinite power, wisdom, and love, must needs ensure all the felicity such a God can communicate, and such holy recipients of his life and bounty can bear, contain, and enjoy! Moreover, when to this immense, this inconceivable happiness, we add the duration of it, that it will continue, increase, be more and more exquisite, and never fail, but abound, and rise, and grow, through the countless ages of a never-ending eternity! then, how are we lost in wonder and astonishment! How do we sink in humiliation! And how do our hearts glow with gratitude, adoration, and love to the LORD Jesus, our Father and our God!—O! my brethren, above all things, live for heaven! Remember the Divine words, “charge the children of Israel that they go forward!” Behold your path shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day!—a blessed, a long, an everlasting day, in the presence of Jesus Christ “whose favour is better than life,” “in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”†

* Rev. xxii. 4.

† Psalm xvi 11.

SECTION XXXVII.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING now, I trust with the best intentions, disposed of some of the little spiritual property I possess, in the hope that I might be able to communicate something useful to my esteemed and beloved spiritual relatives, who, I would fain indulge the hope, will not be unmindful of this "LAST LEGACY" to them, whenever worldly or spiritual distresses give them special opportunity of testing its value. I have only a few words to add by way of conclusion, and shall leave the whole to the blessing of that all-merciful LORD, who alone can prosper our spiritual and temporal services, be they great or small! I have felt that it is incumbent upon all Christians, especially upon New Church Christians, to act, and speak, and live, from spiritual and heavenly motives,—not to please men, but to please God, and to have a conscience void of offence towards Him and towards all men. I know that my motive and design in this work is that of contributing to the present and eternal welfare of my fellow-Christians. Hence I look forward with the pleasing hope, that this humble mite cast into the sanctuary of the LORD, may be acceptable to Him, and useful to my brethren. I think I may with propriety say, that a work similar to this in character and design has never yet been attempted in the New Church. Many excellent and very useful publications have appeared, and those publications, I devoutly hope and believe, will be of permanent use in the Church, and also in the world. But it has long been impressed upon my mind, that a work like the present has been much wanted, and may, possibly, prove of considerable use. I have therefore made the attempt, and have proceeded thus far with pleasure and edification to myself, and I now submit it to the serious and candid perusal of my brethren. My mind has been directed throughout, I would fain hope, to the Divine source of all good, and of all light, for direction and assistance; and whatever may be contained herein that is true, and good, and useful, to that Giver of all Good, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, with all my heart and soul, I ascribe the praise. It will easily be seen, that the design of the present work is not to dwell upon or fully set forth the many grand, heavenly, and divine subjects and doctrines now brought to light, for the use of those

who live under the dispensation of the LORD's Second Advent. These subjects are fully laid before us in far superior light, by that divinely commissioned and enlightened servant of the LORD, Emanuel Swedenborg. The design of this work is specially to lay before my brethren, a just view of that external conduct, life, and order, which are consistent with the principles, doctrines, and mercies we have received; which are essential to the progress of our regeneration, necessary to the respectability and prosperity of the New Church in the world, and suitable to adorn our religious profession, and prepare us for heaven for which we were created. I am well aware that various opinions will be formed concerning this work, according to the different states and ideas of the friends who shall read it. Some may conclude it to be unnecessary, on the ground that the principles and doctrines of the Church are quite sufficient to teach those who embrace them how to live and act in the Church and the world. But it is one thing for those principles and doctrines to be sufficient in themselves, and another thing for them to be operative, and bring forth their important effects in the life and conduct. I am of opinion that a great many persons require incitement, stimulus, guidance, and encouragement, to carry out their principles. If there be none such, and if this kind of reasoning be good and conclusive, we may do away with all publications respecting a good life, and, indeed, with preaching, admonition, exhortation, and advice, altogether. I have long found that we have need of all these means, and that notwithstanding the possession of the writings of our author, too many of us are still far from being all that we ought to be. Others, perhaps, will suppose I have said too much, and laid too much stress upon external things, and too little upon internal things. To this I reply, that I have taken care through the whole, to found the external life upon internal principles, well knowing that all external religion which does not proceed from internal principles of faith and charity, has no life in it; is dead; and consequently no way available to happiness. It is very easy, on the one hand, to converse fluently upon internal subjects, be pleased with them, and make a profession of them; and it may be as easy with some, on the other hand, to depend upon and trust to internal things, while external ones and duties are neglected. But I am firmly persuaded that there is no evidence of possessing internal principles, any further than those principles are seen to operate upon the life and conduct. If they are not

thus brought into ultimates, they have no power or fixity, they pass away, and contribute nothing to our salvation. The hilt of a sword without the blade, would have no effect in a battle,—nor both the hilt and the sword, without a vigorous and skilful hand, and that hand vigorously and skilfully making use of them. I am, I believe, as deeply sensible of the value of internal principles as any man should be; but at the same time I am as deeply sensible of the necessity of externals being united with them. I perceive that I am no farther a disciple of Jesus Christ, than as my external life and conduct proceed from, and are in agreement with, my internal principles of love and faith. Again, there may be some of my readers who may think I am too strict, too particular, and severe, bordering upon “being righteous over much,” that is, sanctimonious, or puritanical, or some may even add—pharisaical. All the answer I deem it necessary to make as to the above objections, is this:—Have I said any thing inconsistent with the Divine Word? or inconsistent with the true Christian character, the example we are under obligations to set before men while in the world? or any thing contrary to our purification and advancement in the heavenly life? I ask further,—is not the character and conduct I have recommended, calculated to adorn the Christian character; to set a proper example; promote our purification? and can we too strictly carry into practice what is agreeable to the holy Word of the LORD? can we devotedly serve our Gracious Master and Benefactor? Do we not all yield less than He requires of us for our good? I am sure that when we enter the world of spirits, we shall blame no friend for giving us good advice, nor blame ourselves for taking good advice; neither shall we then think that a strict and rigid regard to the Divine will and laws in all things external, was either too strict, improper, or unprofitable.

While we are on our short journey through this evil world, and undergoing the process of regeneration, I am fully assured, that all the care, diligence, and circumspection we can use will not be too much to keep our garments unspotted, our spiritual states improving, and our souls prepared for a blessed removal out of this world into that which is eternal, in which our destination will be unalterably fixed for ever. And I please myself with the hope that this work may prove a useful manual to many devout and sincere members of the LORD's New Church, and that its contents may operate beneficially as a caution against

conduct which would be improper and unbecoming the Christian character; as well as that it may excite and stimulate to a holy, conscientious, and orderly life, in all things and in all states, in the course of their progress to the kingdom of heaven!

That our great author—SWEDENBORG—wise as he was in all internal, celestial, and spiritual things, considered it needful to lay down for his own guidance **GENERAL RULES OF LIFE**, which he prescribed for his thoughts and conduct, (of which the more specific directions in this volume may be truly regarded as the particulars involved in those generals) is well known; and I think it but justice to him and to the reader, here to recite them:

- I. To read often and meditate well on the Word of God.
- II. To be always resigned and content under the dispensations of Providence.
- III. Always to observe a propriety of behaviour, and to preserve the conscience clear and void of offence.
- IV. To obey that which is ordained. To be faithful in the discharge of the duties of our employment. And to do every thing in our power to render ourselves as universally useful as possible.

Our adorable LORD, just before he ascended to his glory, gave the following charge to his apostles and disciples: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe **ALL THINGS** whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the consummation of the age."* This Divine charge is equally in force now, as it was then. All things which are to be taught, are also to be observed, and obeyed.—"If ye love me keep my commandments.† The more we love the LORD, the more shall we obey Him; the more strictly we obey Him, the more shall we love Him; the more we love and obey Him, the higher shall we rise in the heavenly life; for, when rightly performed, every duty brings its own reward, and adds immensely to our peace! When, therefore, we are called into the world of spirits, and associate with angels there, may it be said to every member of the New Church; "Blessed are ye, for ye have done your LORD's commandments, ye have a right to the tree of life. Come, enter in through the gates into the city,‡ and dwell in the New heaven for ever and ever!"

* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

† John xiv. 15.

‡ Rev. xxii. 14.

THE END.

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